PAISA: An Analysis of Social Sector Spending in Chhattisgarh

Accountability Initiative

REPORT

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Chapters

Tables

Figures

Acknowledgments

This study would not have been possible without the support and guidance of a lot of people.

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1 The Overall Context of Chhattisgarh

1.1 Introduction

This study delves deep into the implementation of four important Government of India (GoI) social sector schemes in Chhattisgarh to evaluate the nature and effectiveness of public service delivery of school education and nutrition in the State. It seeks to answer the fundamental question of whether development funds reach Chhattisgarh's poor children, and in order to do so, it looks at multiple aspects of the public service delivery system: the efficiency with which government schemes on school education and child nutrition run in the State; whether the facilites are equipped to provide these services; what are the systems and processes in place and do they work, and finally - where are the bottlenecks and the most pressing issues and what steps can be taken to resolve those. This study does not delve into the effectiveness and outcomes of government policies but examines governance systems to see whether the processes and systems put in place by the State are capable of delivering government programmes.

Administrative inefficiencies, poor targeting, high administrative costs and leakages characterize the implementation of many development programs in India, and consequently, only a small fraction of development resources is said to reach their final destination. Although the problem is well-recognized, there is surprisingly little data or analysis in the public domain on (1) how development funds travel through the system and how much, in fact, reaches its final destination and (2) what are the systems and processes employed to implement state schemes and how effective are they in a given local context. In the absence of such data, we have little understanding of the inefficiencies and bottlenecks in the overall process of public service delivery, making it difficult to offer prioritized, customized solutions.

In an effort to plug this gap, we look at the governance systems and fund flows underpinning the implementation of 4 important Centrally Sponsored Schemes in Chhattisgarh: (1) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA); (2) Midday Meal Scheme (MDM); (3) Rashtriya Madhaymik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA) and the (4) Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). The specific schemes have been identified based on a detailed conversation with the Chhattisgarh government as well as an assessment of the Accountability Initiative's core competencies.

The overarching objective of the PAISA study is to assess the capability and efficiency of the financial and governance systems for 4 development programs in the State. The study covers four districts across Chhattisgarh: Rajnandgaon, Janjgir Champa, Bastar and Surajpur. Of these, Bastar, Surajpur and Janjgir Champa are classified as 'tribal districts', with a significant portion of their population belonging to the Scheduled Tribes. An inter-district comparison will therefore allow this study to also ask questions of equity in development spending and its effectiveness in the State.

Before we begin with the findings of this study, it is important to establish a context: Relative to its peers, how does Chhattisgarh perform on the major outcome indicators that are directly targeted by these schemes focused on school education and early childhood nutrition? Using secondary data, we analyse how far the State has come since its inception in November 2000 on these indicators. We compare Chhattisgarh with four other states – Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh (AP), Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Odisha. These states are chosen for their (1) geographical proximity and (2) similarity to Chhattisgarh – other than AP, all are states with a large share of tribal population. MP is also a good comparator as Chhattisgarh itself was carved out of the State in 2000 and it would be interesting to see how far their paths may have diverged. Like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand too is a newly created State and has a significant tribal population.
The charts below are based on the most recently available secondary data from official government reports and websites.

1.2 Educational outcomes

The indicators covered in this section include learning outcomes, enrolment rates, gross and net enrolment ratios, drop-out rates and pass percentages. Data has been collected from multiple sources to present a holistic view of the status of school education in Chhattisgarh.

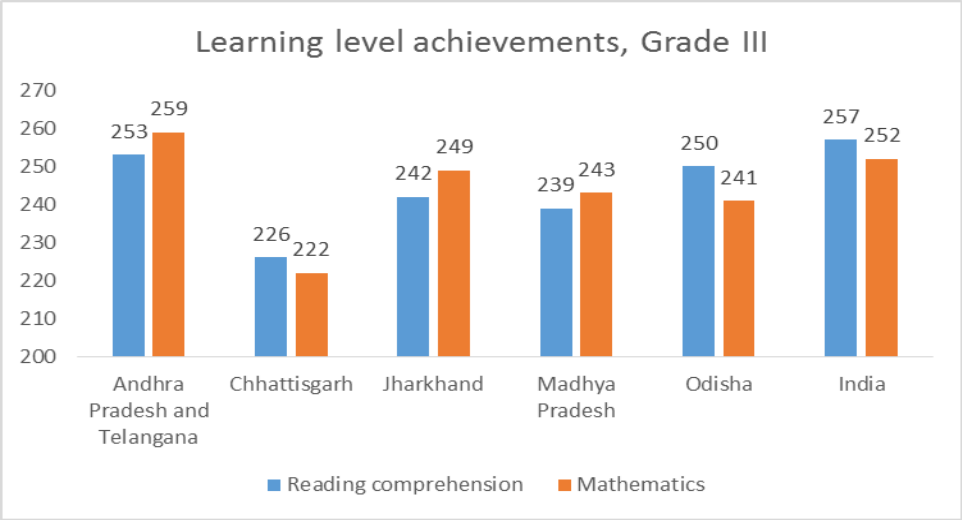
1.2.1 Learning outcomes

In order to gauge the state's standing with respect to learning outcomes, data was gathered from (1) the National Achievement Survey (NAS) Cycle 3, 2013[1] and (2) the ASER (2014) (Annual Status of Education Report) on tests of reading and arithmetic.

Based on the Grade III (2012-13) results of the NAS (Cycle 3)[2], Chhattisgarh performed worse than not only its four peer states but also the national average. The average reading and mathematics scores for the state were 226 and 222 respectively, in contrast to the national averages of 257 and 252.

The NAS for Grade V (2011-12) covered three subjects – Languages (including Reading Comprehension), Mathematics and Environmental Studies (EVS). On this test too, Chhattisgarh performed the worst among its peers and was ranked lower than the national average. The State's score on language, mathematics and environmental studies (EVS) was 229, 232 and 234 respectively – lower than the national-average scores of 247, 251 and 249.

Figure 1-1: Grade III students in Chhattisgarh scored the lowest in both reading comprehension and mathematics

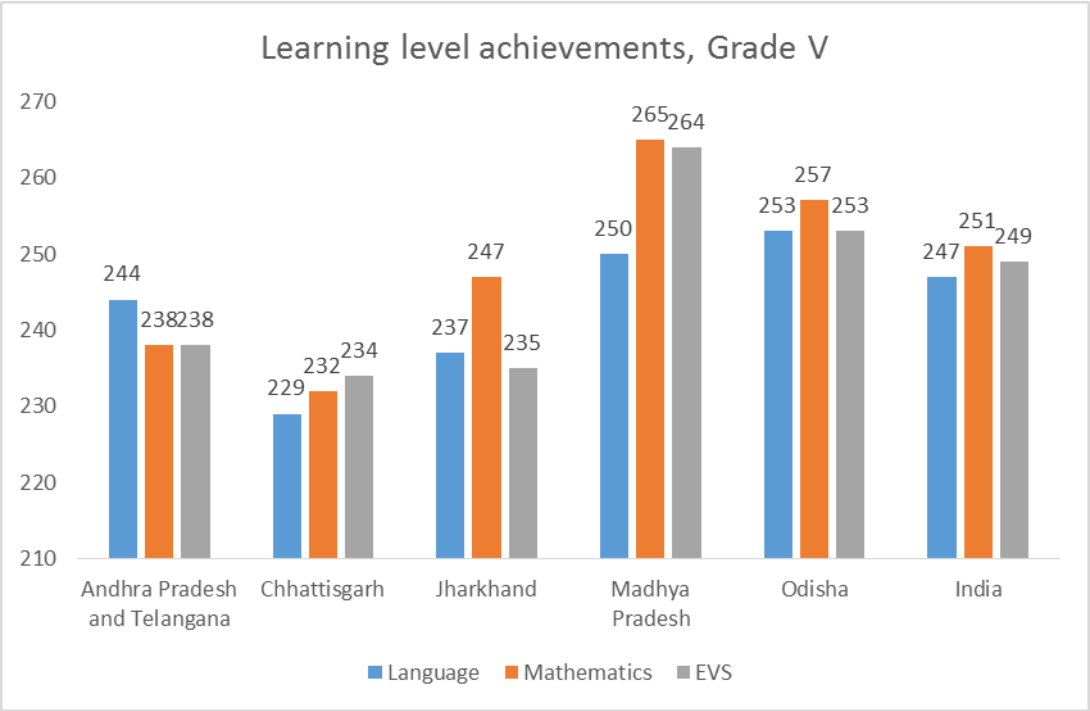


Source: National Achievement Survey by NCERT (3rd cycle), 2012-13

[1] National Achievement Surveys (NAS) are conducted under the Government's flagship programme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). NAS is designed to provide information about the learning achievement of students in elementary education in government and government-aided schools. This is achieved by administering standardized tests to students of Classes III, V and VIII.

[2] The NAS Class III (Cycle 3) assessed student abilities in Language (listening, recognition of words and reading comprehension) and in Mathematics (numbers, basic operations, measurement, data handling, patterns, money and geometry).

Figure 1-2: In the grade V tests too, Chhattisgarh scored the lowest in each of the 3 tested subjects

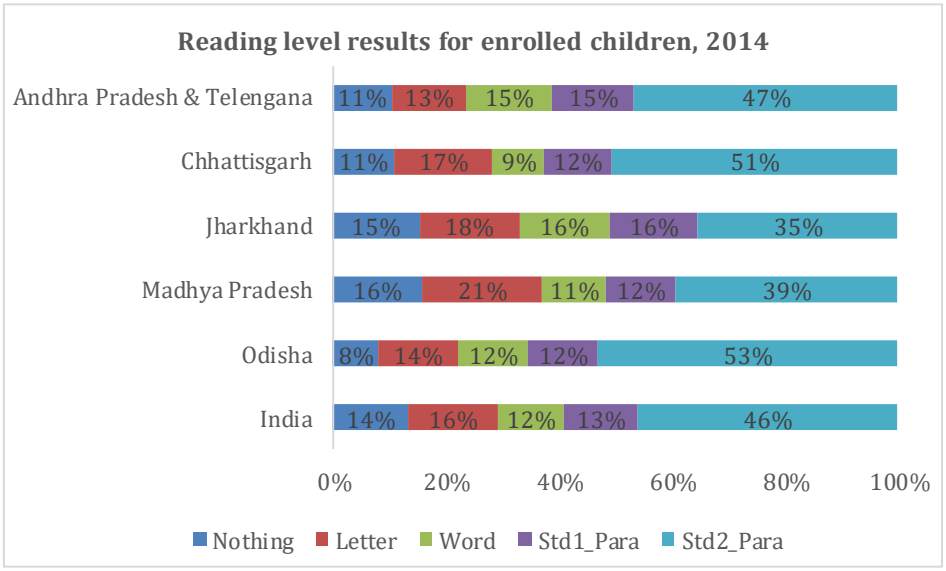


Source: National Achievement Survey by NCERT (3rd cycle), 2011-12

In contrast, the results from the ASER 2014 survey are more encouraging. When tested by ASER on "Reading", 51% of 5-16 year olds in Chhattisgarh were able to read a standard 2 text, higher than those in AP & Telangana, MP and Jharkhand. Overall, while the State performs higher than most of its peers (except Odisha), 11% of children tested could still "read nothing" or identified fewer than 4 out of 5 letters correctly. While this is a poorer performance compared to Odisha, it is an improvement over AP & Telangana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and also the national average (13.5%).

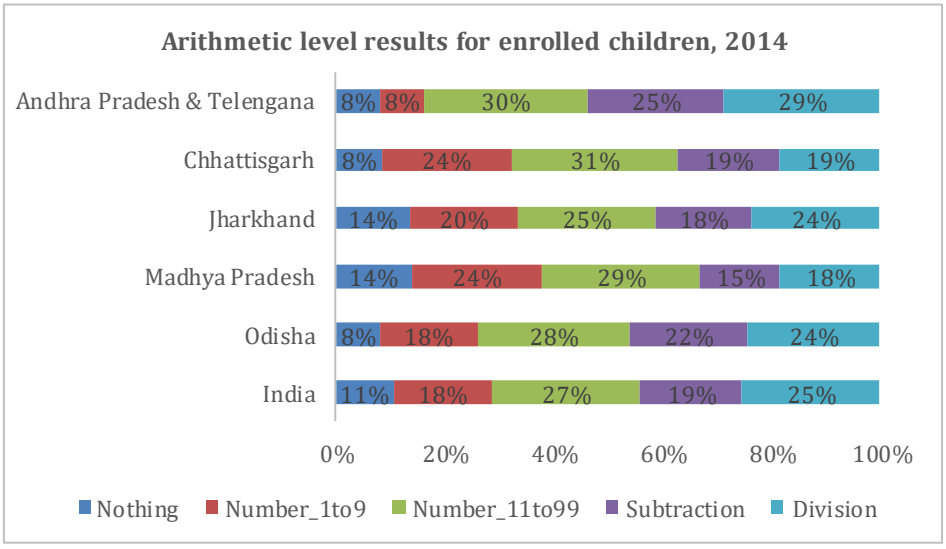
On the ASER Mathematics test again, Chhattisgarh performed better than the national average on the lowest rung: a lower proportion (8%) of children could identify fewer than four out of five single-digit number correctly, than for India (11%). However, when tested on the highest level of mathematical ability (simple division), the State performed worse than its peers (except MP) as well as the national average – less than 20% of 5-16 year olds could solve a 3-digit by 1-digit division problem, 25% could do so in the all-India sample.

Figure 1-3: Chhattisgarh comes a close second behind Odisha[3] on the ASER Reading test



Source: Data query, ASER 2014 data for reading level

Figure 1-4: Chhattisgarh is among the worst performers in ASER's arithmetic test results, with only 19% of those tested able to perform basic division[4]



Source: Data query, ASER 2014 data for arithmetic level

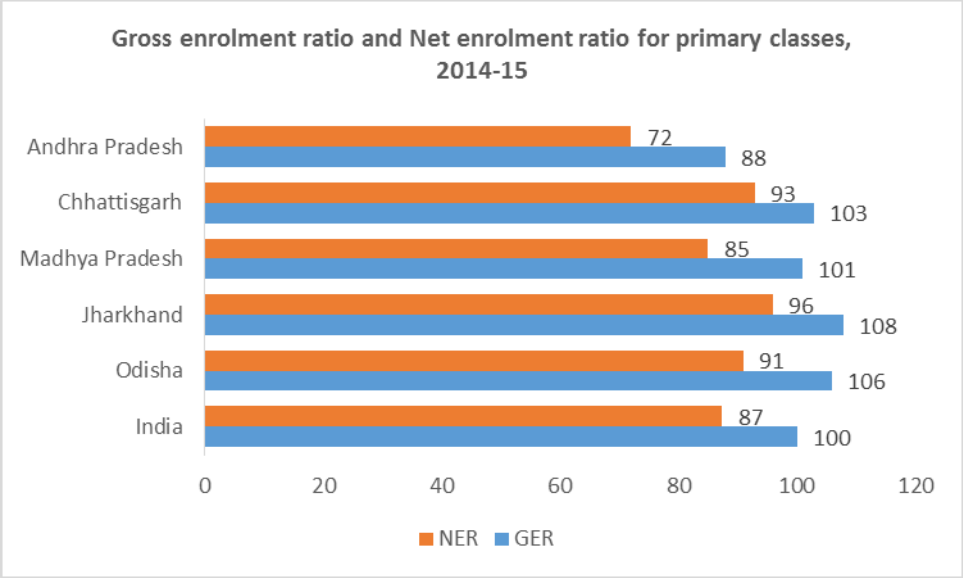
[3] All children in the age group 5-16 are administered a "floor level" reading test in the language of their choice (the test is available in 16 Indian languages). The highest level tested is equivalent to a Std 2 level text. Each child is marked at the highest level at which s/he can read comfortably: (1) Story: Can read a longer paragraph (Std 2 level text); (2) Para: Can read a short paragraph (Std 1 level text); (3) Word: Can read 4 out of 5 words correctly; (4) Letter: Can identify 4 out of 5 letters correctly; (5) Nothing: Identifies fewer than 4 out of 5 letters correctly.

[4] All children in the age group 5-16 are administered a "floor level" test of basic arithmetic. The highest level tested is 3-digit by 1-digit division. Each child is marked at the highest level which s/he can do comfortably: (1) Division: Can solve a 3-digit by 1-digit division problem; (2) Subtraction: Can solve two 2-digit by 2-digit subtraction problems with carryover; (3) Number recognition 11-99: Can identify 4 out of 5 numbers between 11 and 99; (4) Number recognition 1-9: Can identify 4 out of 5 numbers between 1 and 9; (5) Nothing: Identifies fewer than 4 out of 5 single-digit numbers correctly.

1.2.2 Primary Enrolment

The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for primary classes is defined as the total enrolment in primary education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary education age. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) is defined as the total number of students in the theoretical age group for primary education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.
Based on DISE 2014-15 data, Chhattisgarh is one of the high performers on primary enrollment, with both its NER and GER exceeding the national average.

Figure 1-5: Chhattisgarh's NER and GER exceeded the national average

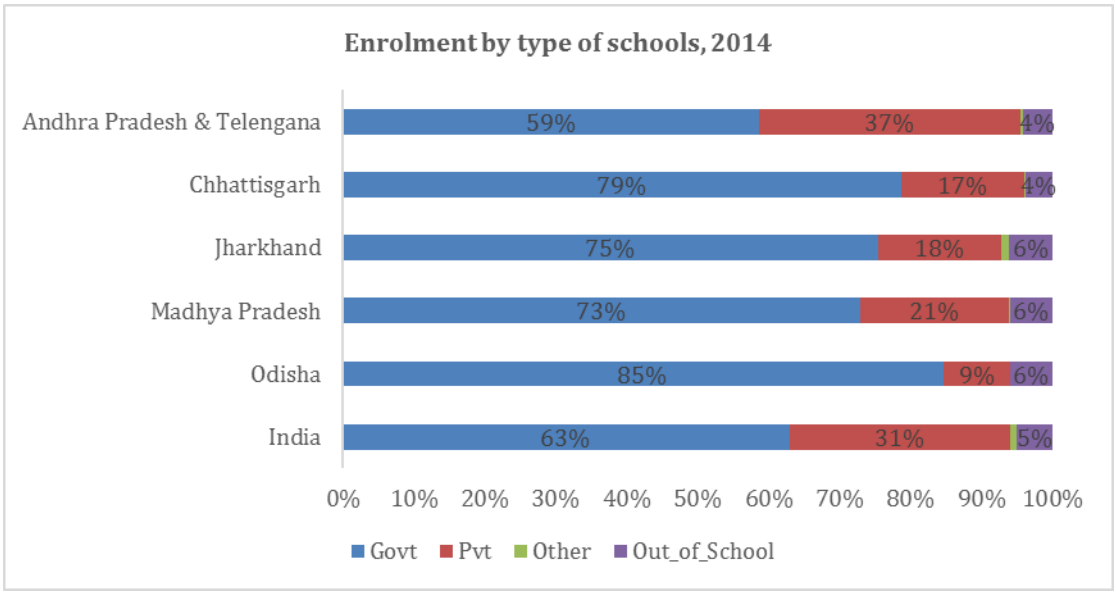


Source: Elementary state report cards, 2014-15, DISE

Government schools are the dominant providers of primary education in the State - ASER 2014 reports that of all children surveyed in Chhattisgarh, 79% were enrolled in government schools and 17% in private schools. This trend is similar in Jharkhand and to a lesser degree, in Madhya Pradesh. The penetration of private schools in Chhattisgarh is much lower than the national average (30.7% enrolment in private schools all India).

With high rates of enrollment, Chhattisgarh also has the lowest proportion of children out of school (4%) both in comparison to the other states, as well as the national average.

Figure 1-6: Nearly 80% of students in Chhattisgarh are enrolled in government schools, second only to Odisha



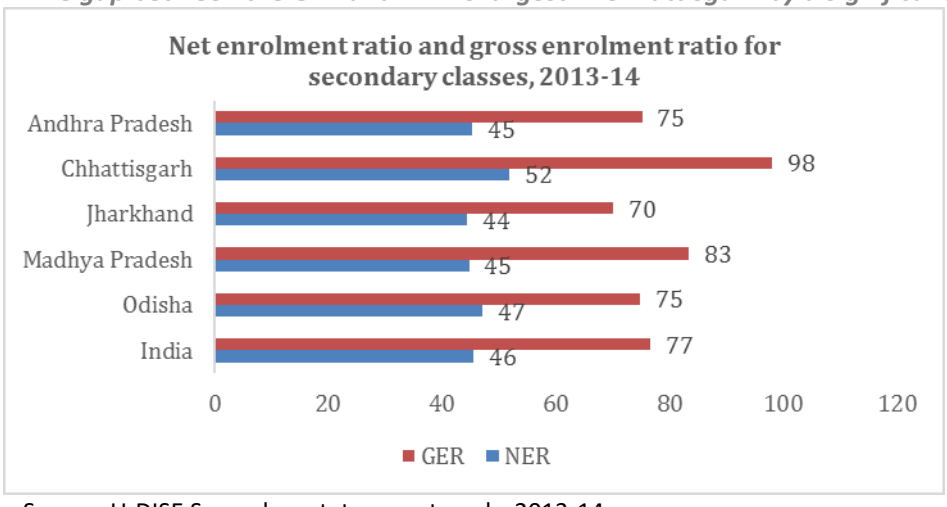
Source: Data Query, ASER data for school enrolment - 2014, ASER Centre

1.2.3 Secondary Enrolment

Based on 2013-14 DISE data, Chhattisgarh has the highest secondary GER (98%) and NER (52%) among all the five states. However, it also has the largest gap between its GER and NER, indicative of high enrolment of under-age and over-age children.

On both counts of primary and secondary enrolment, Chhattisgarh is a high performer compared to its peers and the national average.

Figure 1-7: The gap between the GER and NER is largest in Chhattisgarh by a significant amount

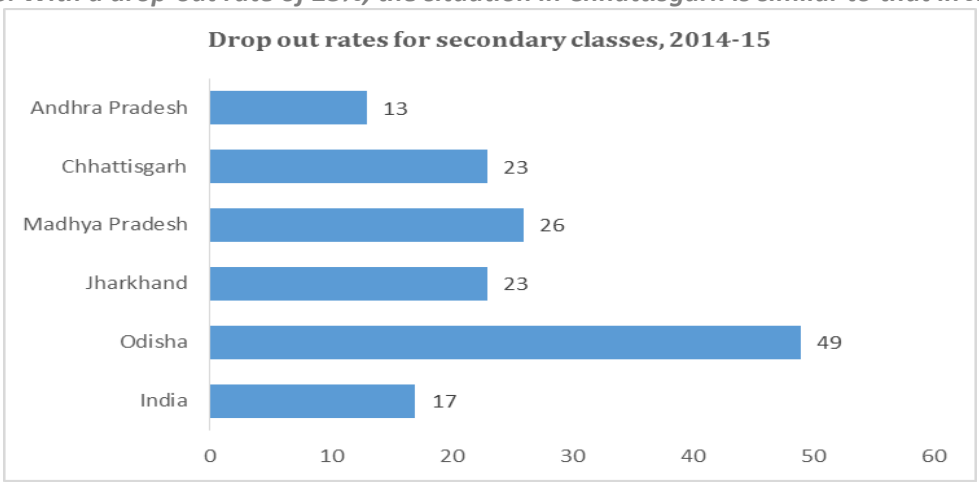


Source: U-DISE Secondary state report cards, 2013-14.

1.2.4 Drop-out rates

Chhattisgarh's average annual drop-out rate at 23% is above the national average (17%). Andhra Pradesh has a lower drop-out rate (13%) while Odisha is a particularly poor performer with nearly half of its enrolled children dropping out between Classes 9 and 10.

Figure 1-8: With a drop-out rate of 23%, the situation in Chhattisgarh is similar to that in Jharkhand

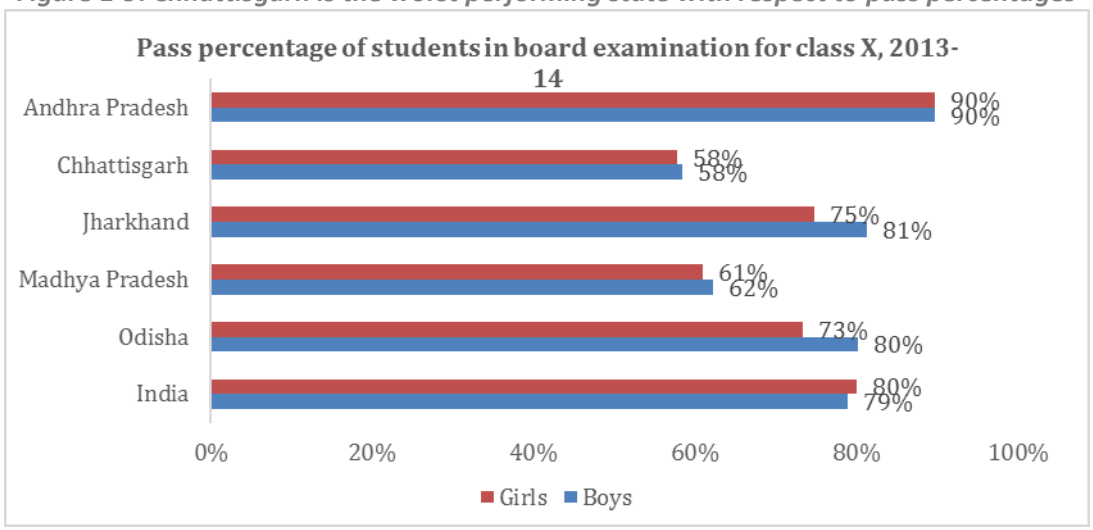


Source: U-DISE Secondary state report cards, 2014-15.[5]

1.2.5 Pass percentages

DISE guidelines define the pass percentage for the Class 10 board examinations as the percentage of students that passed the exam, as a proportion of the number of students that appeared for it[6].

Figure 1-9: Chhattisgarh is the worst performing state with respect to pass percentages



Source: Secondary state report cards, 2013-14

Chhattisgarh performs exceedingly poorly on Class 10 pass percentages – only 58% of students that appeared for the exam in 2013-14, passed. This is the lowest performance among all the peer states and also significantly lower than the national average which stands at about 80%.

Overall therefore, it is fair to say that compared to its peers, the State does well on parameters of primary enrolment and learning. However, its successes begin to diminish when it comes to secondaery education – while it manages to bring children to school, they appear to be learning poorly.

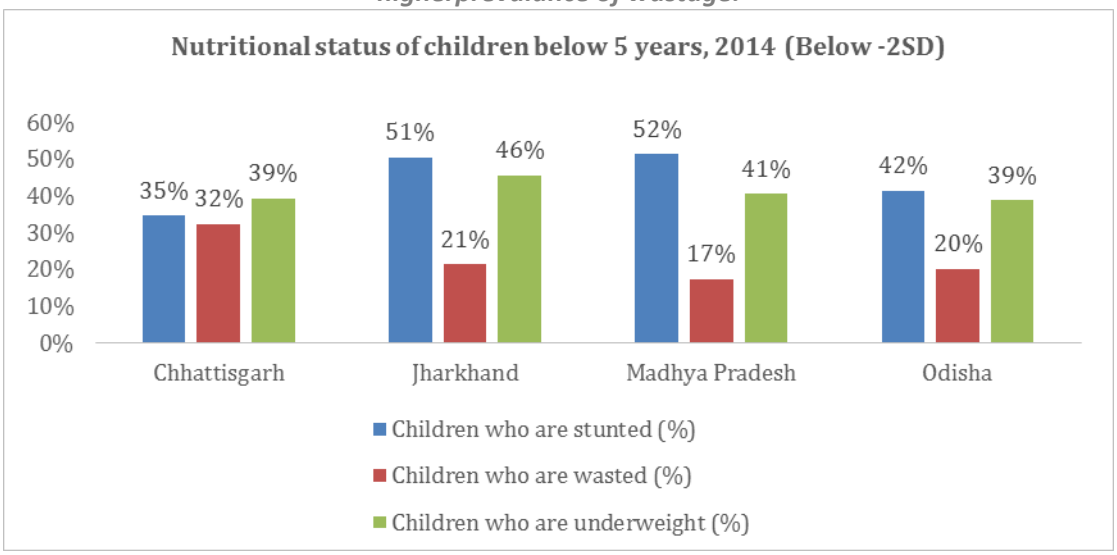
[5] Note: Average Annual Drop-out Rate is the percentage of number of students dropping out from a grade in a particular year to the number of students enrolled in the grade in that year.

[6] Guidelines for filling up the data capture format, U-DISE, 2014.

1.3 Health and nutrition outcomes

This section reveiws Chhattisgarh's performace on key health and nutrition outcomes using data from two most recently available studies: (1) 2014 Annual health survey (AHS) and (2) 2013-14 Rapid Survey on Children (RSOC).

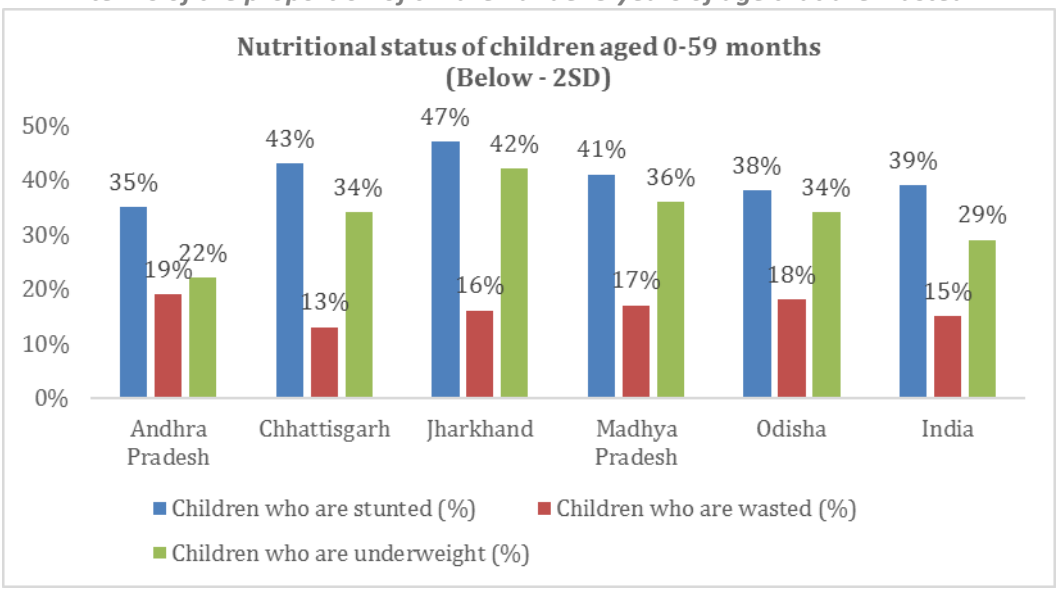
Figure 1-10: Compared to its peers, fewer children in Chhattisgarh are stunted and underweight. Much higherprevalance of wastage.



Source: Clinical, Anthropometric and Biochemical (CAB) 2014, Annual Health Survey, Government of India

Based on AHS 2014, it appears that when compared to its peers, the State does better on parameters of child stunting and weight, but far worse on wasting. Data for Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana was not available.

Figure 1-11: The data for Chhattisgarh varied significantly between the AHS and the RSOC, especially in terms of the proportion of children under 5 years of age that are wasted



Source: Rapid Survey of Children, Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2013-14

In contrast, the Rapid Survey of Children, 2013-14, reported only 13% of children in Chhattisgarh as being wasted in spite of both surveys defining the term in the same manner (weight for height). This may, in part, be due to the difference in methodologies of the two surveys[7]. In fact, this inconsistency in multiple health survey data on malnutrition is a problem widely recognised by researchers as one that does not allow for meaningful comparisons. Based on the RSOC data, Chhattisgarh performed worse than the national average on all three indicators and was also one of the poorer performing states. Both the AHS and RSOC are sample surveys and are therefore not strictly comparable. As we see later, there are significant district variations even in the numbers within Chhattisgarh. Therefore, the results from both the AHS and the RSOC are heavily dependent on the sample selected and cannot be equated.

1.4 Social Sector Spending and the 14th finance commission[8]

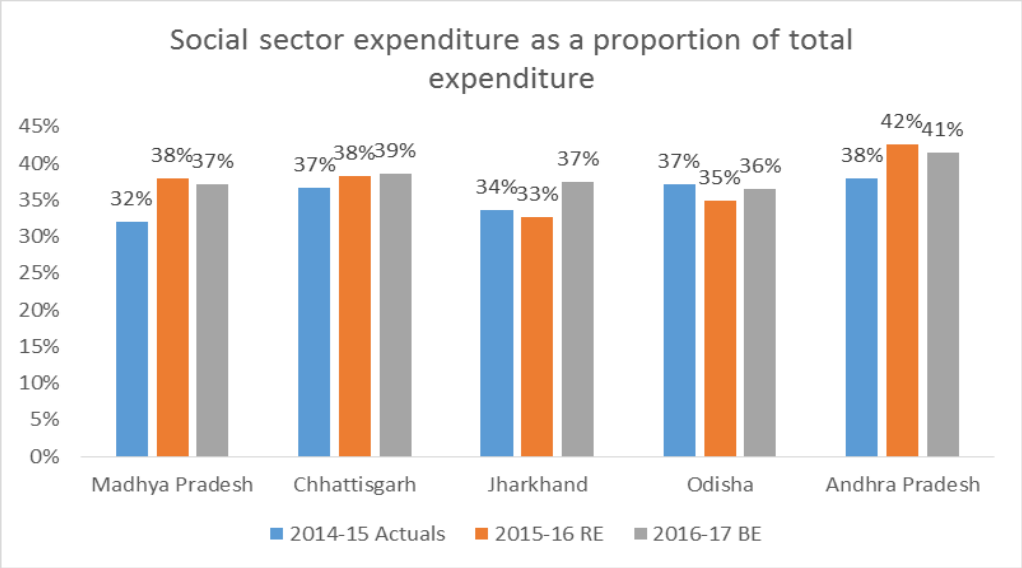
In 2015, the landscape of social sector spending saw a radical overhaul when the Union Government accepted and committed to implement recommendations made by the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC). The recommendations were designed to enhance fiscal autonomy of states by increasing the vertical tax devolution of the divisible pool of taxes from 32% to 42%. Consequently, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) allocated Rs. 5.24 lakh crore as tax devolution. This was significantly higher than the 2014-15 allocation of Rs. 3.38 lakh crore as per Revised Estimates (RE). This increase in devolution was accompanied by several changes in the mode of state transfers, including cuts in Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), the Union Government's primary vehicle for financing social sector investments in the country. The assumption made by the Union government was that State governments would be able to use funds made available from the enhanced tax devolution to finance social sector programs as they see fit.

Given these changes in the fiscal landscape, it is important to understand the implications of the FFC on financing available to the Government of Chattisgarh as this is likely to impact the nature of investments in key social sector programs in the state going forward.

In this section, we present cross-state data collected by the Accountability Initiative to understand the effects of enhanced vertical devolution and the consequent reduction of funds available through CSS on Chattisgarh's ability to invest in social sectors.

[8] Source: "State of Social Sector Expenditure" Report, 2015-16, Accountability Initiative

Figure 1-12: Chhattisgarh spends 38% on social sector as a proportion of total expenditure



Source: Collated from individual state budget documents including supplementary expenditures passed.

With the implementation of the FFC recommendations, Chhattisgarh received a significantly higher proportion of funds from the union government in 2015-16 (RE) compared with 2014-15 (Actuals) – central transfers increased by 65% in this period. This increase was in part due to the change in devolution but mostly because of a change in the devolution formula (which now includes forest cover as an important variable).

Table 1-1: Chhattisgarh's revenue receipts increased 65% from FY 2014-15 (Actuals) to FY 2015-16 (RE)

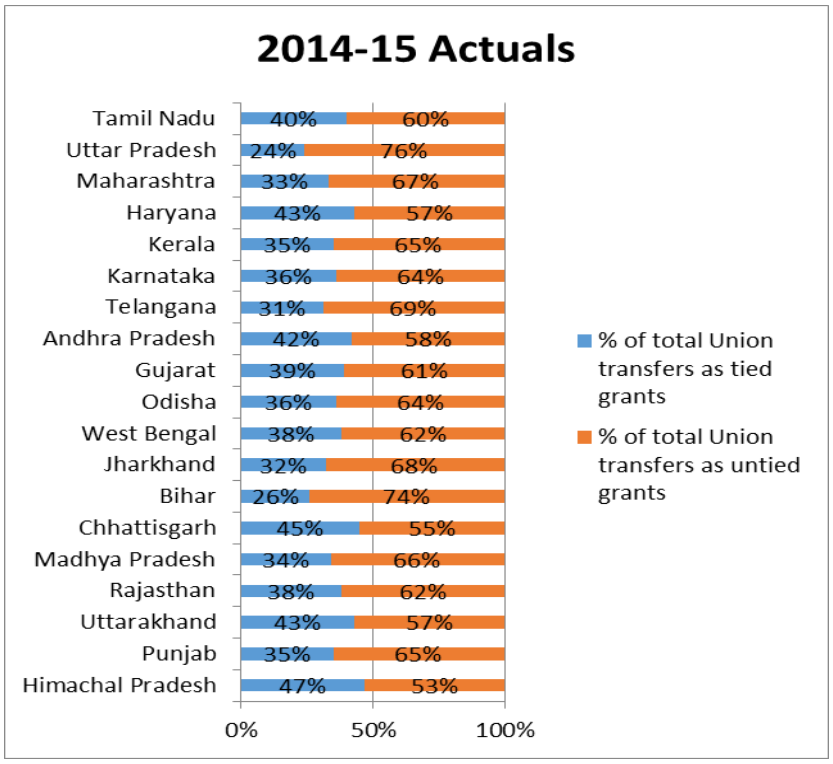
	2014-15 Actuals (Rs. Crore)	2015-16 RE (Rs. Crore)
Revenue Receipts	37,933	58,814
Union Transfers	17,351	28,630

Source: Collated from individual state budget documents

Importantly, the FFC recommendations resulted in a structural shift in the nature of funding available to states as state governments' received a higher proportion of untied funds compared with 2014-15. Figures 1-13 and 1-14 below highlights the extent of the structural shift across 19 states in India. As a percentage of funds received from the Union Government, Chhattisgarh's "untied funds" increased from 55% in 2014-15 (Actuals) to 60% in 2015-16 (RE).[9]

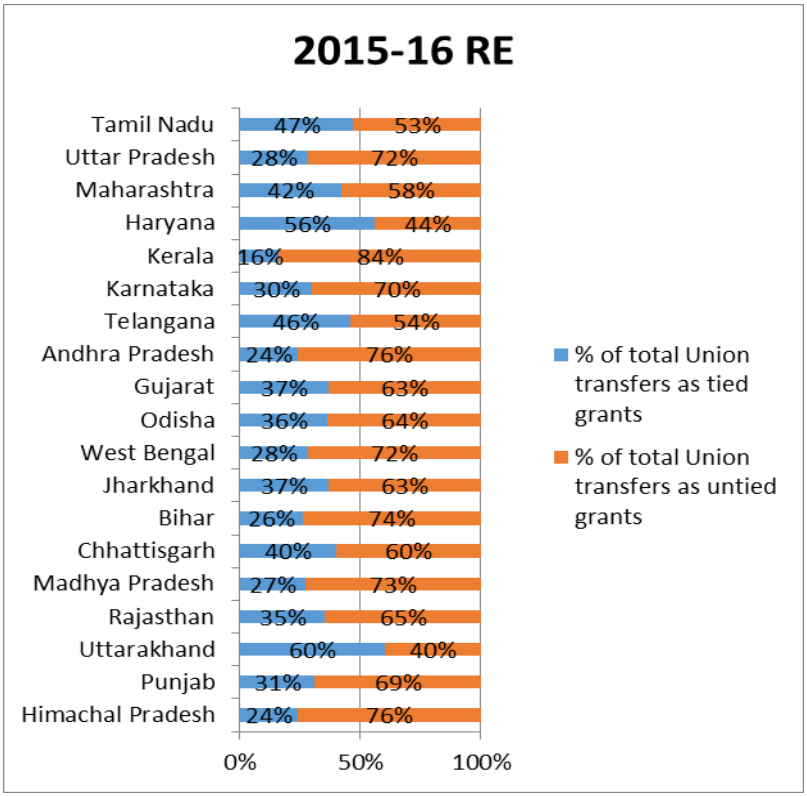
[9] Tied funds are usually for specific purposes, such as grants under Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). In contrast, states can decide how to spend untied funds which are transferred to them. Untied grants includes Grants in Aid from Finance Commissions, Normal Central Assistance (NCA) and tax devolution. Tied grants includes grants for CSS and other Additional Central Assistance, Special Central Assistance. Some of the other grants may not specifically be for a particular scheme but their proportions would be very small. NCA has been collated from Ministry of Finance and thus constitutes actual releases.

Figure 1-13: Untied funds as proportion of Union Transfers to Chhattisgarh in FY 2014-15 (Actuals) stood at 55%



Source: Collated from individual state budget documents

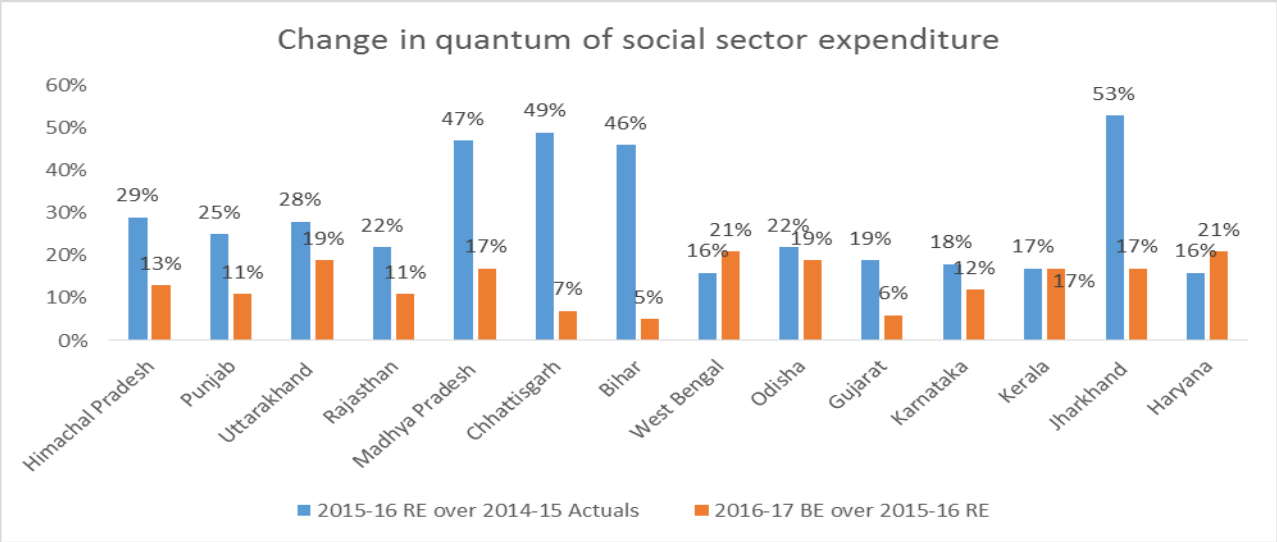
Figure 1-14: The state's share of untied funding increased to 60% in FY 2015-16 (RE)



Source: Collated from individual state budget documents

Interestingly, Chhattisgarh appears to have used a significant portion of its untied money toward investments in social sector programs. When compared with 2014-15 (Actuals), investments in social sector increased by 50% in 2015-16 (RE). With the exception of Jharkhand (where investments in social sectors increased by 53%), this is the highest increase amongst all states studied.

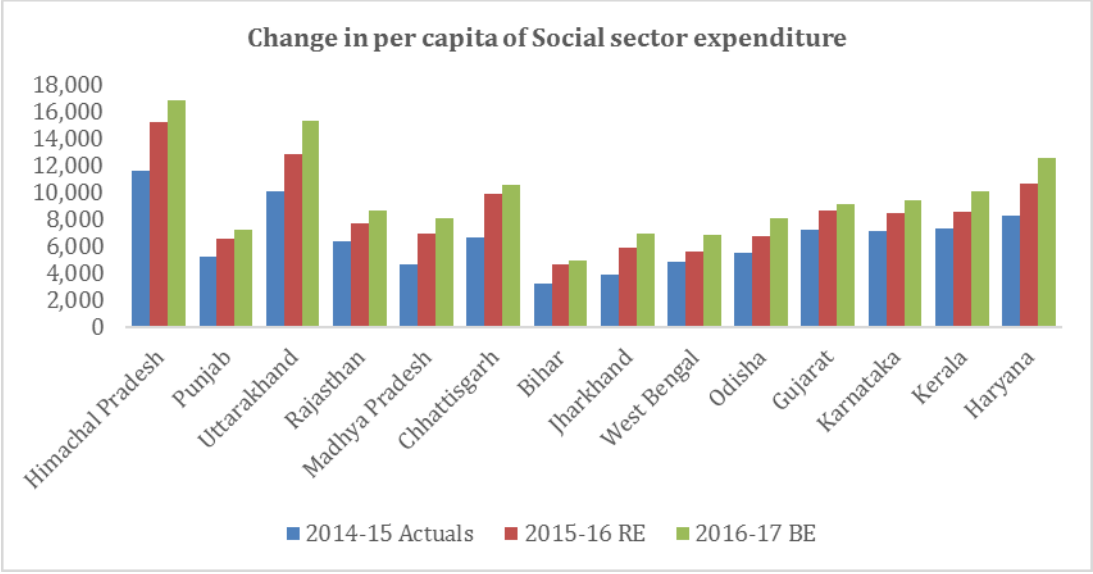
Figure 1-15: Chhattisgarh's quantum of social sector expenditure increased by 49% in 2015-16 RE over 2014-15 actuals



Source: Collated from individual state budget documents including supplementary expenditures passed.

In per capita terms (using Census 2011 population), Chhattisgarh now intends to spend Rs. 10,566 per capita on the social sector. In comparison, per capita expenditure in Bihar is as low as Rs. 4,906.

Figure 1-16: Chhattisgarh intends to spend Rs. 10,566 per capita on the social sector (2016-17 BE)



Source: Collated from individual state budget documents including supplementary expenditures passed. Population figures are based on Census 2011. [10]

[10] Note: Social sector has been defined as per Comptroller Auditor General of India and does not include expenditure on rural development and warehousing. Only expenditures undertaken from the Consolidated Fund have been accounted, net of recoveries.

Given the increased commitment from the state to enhance its investments in social sector programs (as evidenced from current budget data available), particularly now that it has more untied funds the question of implementation gains greater significance. Increased investments will only yield results when implementation bottlenecks are addressed. It is in this context that our study of 4 key social sector programs being implemented by the state gains significance.

Report Outline

While Chhattisgarh outperforms its peers on some key indicators, there remain gaps in its success story. The State has managed to attract its children to both primary and secondary schooling, but its ability to retain these students in secondary education is poor. This finds resonance in the findings of this report where large gaps in teacher availability and attendance are found in the State's secondary schools, which may be seen as part of the reason why Chhattisgarh finds it so hard to keep its secondary students in school. Even when it comes to primary schooling, the State now faces the second-level problem of what happens in classrooms. Both the NAS and ASER point to the fact that much work needs to be done on student learning.

On parameters of child nutrition, Chhattisgarh remains a poor performer among its peers and even though different survey results point to different degrees of the problem, there is enough evidence that documents poor nutrition outcomes in the State.

Given this background, it becomes essential that government programmes aimed at addressing these deficiencies work capably. To the extent that solving problems of student retention, learning and early childhood nutrition is the work of the state machinery; it becomes imperative to examine the efficiency of this machinery to achieve the targets it has set out for itself – and this is what this report sets out to do.

The rest of the report is organized in the following manner: Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present a scheme-wise picture of the study findings using a range of methods employed – primary survey data, in-depth interviews with key scheme officials and secondary budget data. Keeping in mind the commonalities in theme and structure, Chapter 3 presents a joint analysis of the SSA and the RMSA, this is followed by the MDM in Chapter 4 and finally, the ICDS in Chapter 5. All findings are presented by district to enable a district-by-district comparison. The details on the methodology and sample selection are presented in Chapter 2.

2 Study Methodology and Sample Selection

This chapter gives an overview of the methodology used to assess fund flow and service delivery mechanisms of the four schemes under study. The chapter also details the technique of sample selection employed in order to obtain a representative sample of facilities at the village level.

2.1 Research methods

The study used a mixed method approach, wherein both quantitative and qualitative data was collected in order to achieve a comprehensive picture of the ground reality. The quantitative data illustrated the existing situation in fund flow and public service delivery and was collected through both primary and secondary sources. At the state and district levels, data on budget flows were obtained from relevant government departments, while the primary data, which tracked the fund flows and expenditures at the facility level, was collected through a main survey and two additional rounds of spot surveys.

Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted with both frontline workers and senior bureaucrats in charge of implementing the schemes at the block and district levels. These interviews were carried out in order to unpack the stories emerging from the quantitative data.

2.1.1 Quantitative methods

Four different layers of quantitative data were collected and analyzed:

- At the first level, Chhattisgarh's budget data and data on outcomes such as enrolment and learning levels, malnutrition levels etc. was benchmarked against other Indian states. In case of the budget data, the comparison was carried out at the national level with various states from across the country. For outcome indicators relating to nutrition and education, benchmarking was done against four other states – Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha – based on their geographical and demographic similarities to Chhattisgarh. Budget data were obtained from various state budget documents available online, while data on outcomes was gathered from multiple sources, such as the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), District Information System for Education (DISE), Rapid Survey on Children (RSOC), website for the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) and so on. Analyses of these data are reported in Chapter 1.

- Budget data specific to Chhattisgarh viz. fund allocations and releases from the Government of India to the State onwards to the districts, and expenditures (district wise and component wise) were obtained for different financial years, from the relevant State and district government offices for all four schemes – the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and the Midday Meal Scheme (MDM). PAB minutes, where available, were also studied. The data so obtained was used to analyze the pattern of fund flow from the Government of India to the State to the district level over three financial years – FY 2012-13, FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15.

- A primary survey was undertaken in order to obtain quantitative data at the facility level, with the aim of tracking fund flow and decision making processes all the way from the district to facilities

like the SSA school, a secondary school, an anganwadi and a PDS store within a village. A range of topics were probed: the state of the facility's infrastructure; usability of infrastructure; enrollment (disaggregated by gender and social groups); attendance; service provider availability and attendance; trends in flow of funds such as grants, salaries of service providers, and funds for civil works; grain flows for the midday meal scheme and the hot cooked meals served at anganwadi centres; monitoring of facility and avenues for grievance redress; and bottom-up planning (if any) undertaken by the facility. Each of these themes contributed to understanding the road blocks faced in the implementation of the schemes at the ground level.

The facilities covered as part of the survey are listed below:

- A census of all SSA schools in the sampled villages was carried out, with headmasters as the primary respondents. They were questioned on the above topics in relation to the functioning of SSA and MDM.
- Similarly, a census of all secondary schools which mapped to the sample villages was carried out, with the principals of the schools serving as survey respondents.
- Every anganwadi centre (AWC) in each of the sampled villages was also covered, with both anganwadi workers (AWWs) and anganwadi helpers (AWHs) responding on questions of the functioning of the ICDS.
- All the Public Distribution System (PDS) stores that supplied grains for hot cooked meals at the school and AWC were surveyed; with PDS store owner or helper being the survey respondent.
- The local Self-Help Groups working on the MDM scheme in SSA schools and supplying hot cooked meals to AWCs were also surveyed.

- In addition to the above described survey, two rounds of spot surveys were carried out in two of the sample districts – Rajnandgaon and Surajpur. The aim of the spot surveys was to capture the state of infrastructure and monitor attendance at SSA schools and AWCs at 3 points in time over the course of one year.

2.1.2 Qualitative methods

Along with the quantitative data, extensive open-ended interviews were conducted with government officials at the district and block levels, as well as with frontline workers at the facility level. The officials interviewed at the district level included the District Magistrate (DM), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), District Education Officer (DEO), District Project Officer (DPO), ICDS, and the planning, finance and management information system (MIS) officers in the departments of education and women and child development. These interviews were carried out in all four districts and were contingent on the availability of the officials, although the success rate of obtaining meetings was high. At the block level, we hoped to interview the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) and supervisors working for the ICDS. However, CPDO positions were found to be vacant at most block offices and hence supervisors served as the main point of contact. At the facility level, open-ended interviews were carried out with anganwadi workers, self-help groups, anganwadi supervisors and headmasters in two of the sample districts – Rajnandgaon and Surajpur.

The purpose of carrying out these interviews was to unpack the trends seen in the quantitative data. The themes of the interviews centered on the administrative structures within their departments, respondents'

roles and responsibilities, patterns of time use, perceptions around planning processes, procedures surrounding fund flows and monitoring and grievance redressal. This information enabled us to understand and triangulate the data collected from the quantitative survey and greatly enhanced the comprehensiveness of the study.

2.2 Study Process and Timeline

Step 1: The initial background research for the study began in October 2014 and continued until December 2014. This included an understanding of the processes involved in delivery of the schemes – the administrative structure, who reported to whom, how funds flowed from one level to another etc. A number of state level officials were interviewed, and flowcharts were drawn to enrich the study team's own understanding of the schemes. Simultaneously, a process was initiated to obtain budget data and data on outcome indicators (the statistics and indicators used were regularly updated through the course of the project).

Following the initial round of background research, survey formats for all facilities were developed. The design of the survey tools was refined and finalized over 7 rounds of piloting undertaken by different team members between January and March 2015. Once the questionnaires were finalized, the preliminary planning work for the quantitative survey began, and consisted of sampling and logistical planning. The planning process was extensive and was undertaken by a core team of three people, assisted by 9 members of Accountability Initiative's field staff - Senior PAISA Associates (SPAs) and PAISA Associates (PAs). A first round of training of the Senior PAISA Associates and PAISA Associates, or a master training, was undertaken in the month of June 2015 in Raipur. As part of the training, the staff were briefed on the four schemes under study and given specific and detailed directions on how to fill in the eight different tools.

This team of 12 people then undertook the task of hiring local volunteers to conduct the survey. An initial round of testing was conducted through potential enumerators, all locals from the four sample districts, after which promising candidates were chosen for the main training. A volunteer training (based on the format of the Master training) of potential volunteers was carried out in June 2015 by the PAs and SPAs in the presence of at least one member of the core team, in each of the four districts. Post the completion of this training, a second test was conducted on the basis of which 30 enumerators were selected to carry out the survey.

The actual survey began in the first week of July 2015 and continued till the last week of the month, a simultaneous exercise which took place across the four target districts. Data collection was carried out primarily by enumerators, closely monitored by Accountability Initiative's staff who were spread out over all four districts for the entire duration of the survey. Post the completion of the survey, the filled in questionnaires were submitted for data entry and checks were carried out over the course of August and September 2015.

Step 2: Data from the main survey was supplemented by data from open-ended interviews with government officials and frontline workers at three levels of government – district, block and village. The interviews with the district level officials were conducted by all 3 members of the core team, along with 1-2 additional staff members from AI's Delhi office. The first round of these interviews was conducted in May 2015, with various district level government officials in Rajnandgaon and Janjgir Champa. Meetings with the

district officials of Surajpur and Bastar were held in October 2015 and March 2016 respectively. The interviews with the block officials and frontline workers were carried out by a team of two PAs and SPAs per district and took place in both Rajnandgaon and Surajpur simultaneously in October 2015.

Step 3: The two additional rounds of spot surveys discussed earlier were conducted in a sub-sample of two districts - Rajnandgaon and Surajpur - to assess changes if any, in the state of infrastructure and outcomes such as attendance in primary schools, from the time of the main survey.

These assessments were carried out in 4 blocks in each of the 2 districts. In Rajnandgaon, 2 blocks were tribal majority blocks and 2 were non-tribal majority blocks. The blocks were selected at random from within the sample of the main survey. Once the blocks were finalised, 8 villages were randomly chosen from each block. In total therefore, 64 villages (32 villages per district) were surveyed under the spot survey. Data collection was carried out by 8 enumerators per district and was overseen by a total of 4 members of the AI field staff. The spot surveys were carried out in October 2015 and February 2016.

Step 4: The collection of secondary data (primarily budget and fund flow related) from government offices and online sources was a continuous exercise and was undertaken from the beginning of the project up until February 2016. In case of the main survey, data sets were received towards the end of October 2015 and consequently, preliminary quantitative analysis was started. In the month of February 2016, the research team met with the Government of Chhattisgarh in order to share the findings from the research and to receive feedback on the work carried out thus far. The feedback from the meeting was incorporated into the analysis of the primary and secondary data, which continued until the end of the month. While the data analysis approached completion, the writing of the report was started in March and completed by April 2016.

2.3 Sample frame and sample selection

2.3.1 Sample Frame

Given that the study focuses primarily on facilities at the local level – the AWC, PDS, primary school and secondary school - it was decided that the village would be used as the sampling unit for the PAISA survey. Accordingly, the first step in the sampling strategy was to use Census data from 2011 to list all the villages, block-wise, in each of the four study districts, with the aim of randomly selecting 60 villages from each district; a total sample of 240 villages.

Next, every block within each of the four districts was classified as either tribal or non-tribal, depending on whether the proportion of people belonging to the Scheduled Tribe (STs) was above or below the average share of STs in Chhattisgarh's population (approximately 35%). Accordingly, if the percentage of STs in the block population was above 35%, the block was classified as being primarily tribal. Based on this criterion, all the blocks in Bastar were classified as being tribal, while all the blocks in Janjgir-Champa were classified as being non-tribal.

As one of the main objectives of the study was to compare the processes and outcomes involved in the delivery of services under SSA, ICDS, RMSA and PDS between tribal and non-tribal areas, it was important that the study ensured equal representation of both. In order to ensure this, it was decided to that the final sample would contain an equal number of villages from both tribal and non-tribal blocks.

Two salient points need to be made here. First, as discussed above, since Bastar and Janjgir Champa were found to be entirely tribal and non-tribal respectively, the above described division did not hold for these two districts. Second, an additional buffer of 30 villages per district was provided for, which meant a total of 90 villages was randomly selected from each district. Thus, in a district like Rajnandgaon which was part tribal and part non-tribal, this meant selecting 45 villages from tribal blocks and 45 villages from non-tribal blocks. It must be noted however, that the buffer villages were only used when the facilities in the villages from the core sample were impossible to access for logistical or other reasons.

As a third step, the sampling method of probability proportional to size (PPS) was employed to ensure that blocks with larger populations had a correspondingly higher chance of representation in the sample. This can be illustrated using the example of the district of Rajnandgaon, which has 9 blocks. Of these, 4 blocks were classified as being tribal (Chhuriya, Mohla, Manpur and Ambagarh) and 5 were classified as being non-tribal (Chhuikhadan, Khairagarh, Dongargarh, Rajnandgaon and Dongargaon). Based on this classification, 45 villages each needed to be selected from the four tribal blocks and the five non-tribal blocks.

Taking the case of the tribal blocks, when the population across the four blocks was aggregated, it was established that Chhuriya contributes to 39% of the district's population in tribal blocks, Ambagarh contributes another 22%, Manpur, 20% and Mohla 19%. In other words, Chhuriya is the largest of tribal blocks in Rajnandgaon in terms of population size, followed by Ambagarh, Manpur and Mohla, and accordingly the sample had proportionately more villages from Chhuriya. This was accomplished by multiplying the block-wise population shares (in percentages) with 45. It was found that of the 45 villages, 18 villages needed to be sampled from Chhuriya, 10 from Ambagarh, 9 from Manpur and 9 from Mohlal; a division that corresponds to the respective share of these blocks in the total district population in tribal blocks. A similar method was used to ascertain the number of villages that needed to be selected from the non-tribal blocks.

Once the number of villages per block was ascertained, a simple random sampling method was used to select the sample villages from within each block (after dropping small villages, that is, villages with households fewer than 50). This was done by assigning random values to each village within a block using the RAND command, and then sorting them in ascending order based on the randomly assigned value. The pre-determined number of villages (say 18 in Chhuriya) were then selected, starting at the top of the ordered list. That is, those villages which were randomly assigned the lowest values would be selected first, which in the case of Chhuriya would be the first 18 villages.

2.3.2 Sample Selection

Based on the above described methodology, a list of 240 core villages and 120 buffer villages was arrived upon. The survey was then conducted with the following list of frontline workers and personnel in each of the sample villages:

- Headmaster of primary school under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – SSA (HM)
- Angandwadi worker under the Integrated Child Development Scheme– ICDS (AWW)
- Anganwadi helper under the ICDS – ICDS (AWH)
- Self-help group providing services (hot cooked meals) to local anganwadi centre – ICDS (SHG)
- Public distribution shop – PDS

- Headmaster of primary school serving midday meal – MDM (HM)
- Self-help group providing services to primary school under MDM scheme – MDM (SHG)
- Headmaster of secondary school – RMSA (HM)

The following table presents the number of interviews conducted (per tool) in each of the four districts:

Table 2-1: Number of interviews conducted

	SSA (HM)	ICDS (AWW)	IICDS (AWH)	ICDS (SHG)	PDS	MDM (HM)	MDM (SHG)	RMSA (HM)
Bastar	168	211	207	211	59	168	169	19
Janjgir-Champa	96	131	117	96	59	96	92	16
Rajnandgaon	62	96	81	94	64	62	62	10
Surajpur	161	239	219	232	59	161	156	17
Total	**487**	**677**	**624**	**633**	**241**	**487**	**479**	**62**

3 SSA and RMSA

Summary Findings

- Enrolment is near equal for boys and girls at both primary and secondary levels. SC and ST students are overrepresented (as a proportion of their overall share in the population) in government primary schools, but underrepresented in secondary schools.
- Average student attendance in primary schools is about 70%. Recorded attendance is lower in secondary schools, particularly in Bastar with only about one in every two students enrolled found in class on the day of the survey.
- Teacher vacancies are high in secondary schools, particularly for subjects such as Science, Mathematics and English. Bastar and Rajnandgaon have more pupils per teacher in secondary schools than the RMSA Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) norms (30:1). The PTR in primary schools is well within both the SSA and RTE norms.
- Teacher absenteeism is a significant problem, particularly in tribal districts: 20% of all recruited primary school teachers in the sampled districts were absent on the day of the survey.
- A majority of teachers in Chhattisgarh are Shiksha Karmis, who unlike regular teachers, are hired through the panchayat. Our survey found that it was common for Shiksha Karmis teaching in an SSA school to receive salaries with a 2-3 month delay.. Under RMSA, 70-80% of Shiksha Karmis said they had received their last salary in the month prior to the survey, with a lag of 1-2 months. Large delays in fund release (by both the state and the central government under SSA and by the state government in the case of RMSA) could potentially translate into late salaries. In the case of RMSA, for instance, while the central government had released 80% of its contribution by Q2 of FY 2014-15, the state government released 55% of its funds only by Q4.
- On average, about 40% of the primary schools surveyed do not have a usable toilet on their premises; over 20% have no usable hand-pump/ tap or other drinking water facility; over half are without a playground; and nearly 70% do not have a complete boundary wall. Bastar ranks the lowest on infrastructure provisioning in primary schools.
- RMSA schools have larger infrastructure gaps than non-RMSA schools, particularly in the provisioning of boundary walls and computer labs. Surajpur performs the poorest here with less than 20% of its secondary schools having a computer lab and only 35% having a usable toilet on their premises.
- Rajnandgaon most consistently outperforms the other three districts on both primary and secondary school infrastructure.
- Schools face significant challenges in creating new infrastructure under both SSA and RMSA. Most civil works sanctioned are not in line with school needs- the probability of a primary school receiving a new classroom was 6% in FY 2014-15 and 16% in FY 2013-14, given that the school had requested it.
- The ability to spend funds allocated for construction is constrained by multiple rules, resulting in many pending civil works. In both SSA and RMSA, this has led to a decline in new fund allocations for civil works.
- In FY 2014-15, SSA grants were delayed and RMSA grants not disbursed at all.
- Monitoring by administration is limited. Nearly 30% of SSA schools were not visited by a cluster or nodal official even once in FY 2014-15. When visited, an average of 6 months of time had elapsed since the last visit. Over half of all secondary schools surveyed were never visited by a district official in FY 2014-15. In Bastar, a year had passed since the last visit by a district official.
- Nearly all schools had SMCs/ SMDCs in place, but fewer than half reported making any school-level plans in the last financial year.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we unpack Chhattisgarh's expenditure on the education sector, primarily through the lens of two Centrally Sponsored Schemes i.e. the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA).

The next few sections describe what a typical primary or secondary school in Chhattisgarh looks like in terms of its infrastructure provision, student enrollment and attendance, and teacher availability and attendance. The attempt is to unpack the gaps therein, both from the lens of RTE norms and SSA and RMSA norms, and then build a narrative of what might explain these gaps. What emerges is a complex story of challenges on several fronts: human resources, finances, civil works and governance in the state's education sector.

3.2 What does a typical SSA/ RMSA school look like?

This section focuses on what a typical primary and secondary school (that receives SSA and RMSA funds) in Chhattisgarh looks like. Given the fact that both the SSA and RMSA are designed as schemes that focus first and foremost on the provisioning of physical infrastructure, it is only fitting that we start with an analysis of the extent to which these needs have been met in Chhattisgarh's schools.

Our survey data (which relied on surveyor observation) shows significant gaps in the availability of key infrastructure inputs in both primary and secondary schools. Among the SSA schools, this gap is seen most starkly in the availability of boundary walls[11] and playgrounds, with less than half of surveyed schools having these in place. Electricity connection was found in only 56% of the surveyed schools[12]. Usable toilets were found in only three of the five SSA schools surveyed, on average. While 74% of all SSA schools in our sample had a separate toilet for girls, only 55% had girls' toilets in usable[13] condition. The predominantly tribal districts of Bastar and Surajpur performed worse than other surveyed districts on most infrastructure indicators, with Bastar faring slightly worse.

Table 3-1: Gaps in infrastructure facilities at primary schools, more visible in tribal districts, Rajnandgaon fares the best

	Percentage of schools with the following facilities				
	Bastar	**Janjgir Champa**	**Rajnandgaon**	**Surajpur**	**Sample Avg.**
Electricity connection	40%	88%	89%	42%	56%
Usable hand pump/tap	71%	92%	90%	72%	78%
Complete boundary wall	29%	53%	50%	20%	32%
Playground	37%	44%	56%	60%	48%
Usable toilet	51%	70%	97%	63%	62%
Separate Girls' toilet	77%	76%	98%	62%	74%
Usable Girls' toilet	43%	57%	94%	50%	55%
Library room	9%	2%	8%	5%	6%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[11] RTE norms require that all SSA schools have arrangements for securing the school building by a boundary wall or fencing.

[12] The State government is cognizant of this shortfall and has issued an order to achieve 100% electrification of schools within the next 3 years.

[13] Toilets may not be in use because of multiple reasons – a broken toilet bowl, lack of water, no funds for maintenance, no door etc.

Secondary schools seemed to fare better on infrastructure provisioning, but that was mostly on account of the older, non-RMSA schools in our sample (31 of the total 62 schools surveyed) which were built by the state, primarily in the eighties and nineties. On many infrastructure parameters (such as usable toilets, boundary walls and computer labs), the non-RMSA secondary schools did better than RMSA schools – indicating that like SSA, infrastructure provisioning under RMSA has been beset with challenges. These are discussed in detail later.

The most significant infrastructure gaps at the secondary school level seemed to be in the provisioning of boundary walls and computer labs. Interestingly, unlike SSA, there were significant variations across districts. For instance, while only 35% of all secondary schools in Surajpur and 58% in Bastar were found to have a separate and usable toilet for girls, such toilets were almost the norm in secondary schools surveyed in Janjgir Champa and Rajnandgaon (about 80-90% of the schools surveyed had a separate and usable girls' toilet). Similarly, nearly twice as many secondary schools surveyed in Janjgir Champa and Rajnandgaon had computer labs than those in the other two districts.

A final note on school infrastructure provision: on most parameters of infrastructure (at both the primary and the secondary level), Rajnandgaon seemed to fare better than the other 3 districts. This was despite large parts of the district (e.g. tribal blocks of Mohala, Manpur) being at considerable distance from the district headquarters and facing problems of access. In our qualitative interviews we were told that this could be because of the district being an important political constituency, thereby suggesting that political will may be partially explaining better outcomes.

Table 3-2: Major gaps in provision of computer labs and boundary walls in secondary schools; more pronounced in tribal districts

Percentage of schools with the following facilities				
	Bastar	**Janjgir Champa**	**Rajnandgaon**	**Surajpur**
Electricity connection	74%	75%	100%	71%
Computer Lab	21%	44%	40%	18%
Complete boundary wall and gate	37%	44%	30%	29%
Playground	58%	75%	70%	71%
Separate Girls' toilet	63%	88%	100%	35%
Usable toilet	58%	81%	90%	35%
Usable separate Girls' toilet	58%	81%	90%	35%
Library	58%	81%	80%	76%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

3.3 Student enrollment and attendance

Once the schools are built, how successful has Chhattisgarh been in enrolling its children and keeping them in the classrooms? And has it been able to maintain equity viz. gender and social group membership while doing so? Our survey looked at school-level enrollment records to disaggregate enrollment by gender and social groups. In addition, an actual headcount of children was taken on the day of the survey (unannounced visit) to provide an indicator of the school's typical attendance figures. These numbers are presented below.

Given that national enrollment in both primary and secondary schooling is skewed towards male students (more so at the secondary level)[14], it is an important achievement that Chhattisgarh has attained near gender parity in both its primary and secondary enrollment levels. According to the National University of Educational Planning and Administration's (NUEPA) report on School Education in India, Chhattisgarh showed gender parity at the primary level in 2014-15, with the ratio of girls' to boys' enrollment being 0.96 (in comparison to the national level of 0.93). At the secondary level this number stood at 1.02, but fell to 0.95 at the higher secondary level. In comparison, the ratio of girls' to boys' enrollment at these levels, nationally, is 0.90 and 0.89 respectively. In nearly all districts surveyed and in both primary and secondary schools, girls were either half or more of the total number of students enrolled.

The proportion of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) category children enrolled in primary schools was significantly higher than the relative share of these groups in the district population (see tables 3-3 and 3-4). In other words, children from marginalized groups seemed to be overrepresented in government school enrollments at the primary level[15]. This gives credence to the generally held belief that only the most socially disadvantaged send their children to government schools, with those with means shifting out to private schools or nurseries[16].

Table 3-3: Percentage share of SCs and STs in district population

	SC	ST
Bastar	1%	70%
Janjgir Champa	30%	11%
Rajnandgaon	9%	30%
Surajpur	5%	48%

Source: Census 2011

Table 3-4: Share of SC and ST children in SSA schools higher than their relative share in the population

	SC	ST	Others
Bastar	1%	79%	20%
Janjgir Champa	36%	13%	51%
Rajnandgaon	7%	41%	52%
Surajpur	7%	59%	34%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015; Note: Others includes children belonging to Other Backward Classes and General category castes

[14] At the all India level, the ratio of girls' to boys' enrollment at the primary level was reported to be 0.93 in 2014-15. At the secondary level, this figure stood at 0.90 and at the higher secondary level, 0.89. (http://www.dise.in/Downloads/Publications/Documents/U-DISE-SchoolEducationInIndia-2014-15.pdf)

[15] The survey also collected data on the number of disabled children in schools. However, the enrollment numbers for this category were particularly low – on average, we found only disabled child in an SSA school in the entire district.

[16] The proportion of 6-14 year old children enrolled in private schools in rural Chhattisgarh is significantly lower than the average for rural India (17.8% compared to 30.8% in 2014). However, it has been rising at a rate faster than the growth seen in private school enrollment at an all India level. Between 2006 and 2014, the proportion of children enrolled in private schools in rural Chhattisgarh more than doubled (from 8.5% to 17.8%). In comparison, the percentage of children in private schools in rural India increased from 18.7% to 30.8% over the same period (ASER 20114). For more details, see http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%20TOT/State%20pages%20English/chhattisgarh.pdf.

The pattern of enrollment in secondary schools was found to be slightly different with children belonging to other caste groups (Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the general caste category) having a higher share in enrolment, relative to their representation in the district population. This could be because of two reasons. One, many SC and ST students (more STs) tend to drop out even before they complete grade V[17]. Two, the poor availability of secondary schools per se within districts (DISE data suggest that there are only 301 government secondary schools – both RMSA and non-RMSA – across our four sample districts[18]) could explain why children from other caste groups also opt for government schooling.

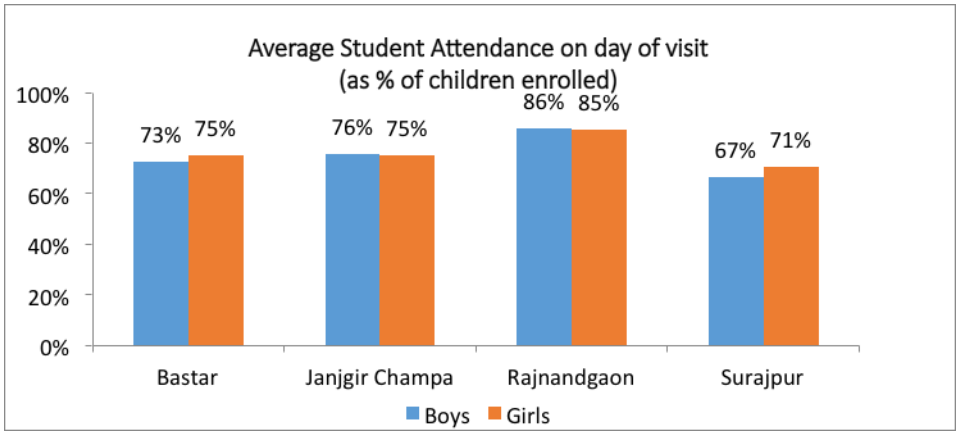
Table 3-5: Enrolment of 'other' category students higher in secondary schools

	SC	ST	Others
Bastar	2%	65%	33%
Janjgir Champa	36%	4%	60%
Rajnandgaon	9%	25%	66%
Surajpur	7%	47%	46%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

In terms of student attendance in primary schools, our survey found attendance levels similar to those recorded by national surveys such as ASER, albeit with significant district variations. According to the 2014 ASER survey, across India, about 71% of enrolled children in primary schools were present on the day of the survey (similar numbers were reported in 2013). In our survey, the highest (average) student attendance was seen in Rajnandgaon with over 85% of all students enrolled present on the day of the unannounced visit. Surajpur had the lowest attendance in comparison, with proportionately fewer boys found to be attending primary schools than girls (figure 3-1). On average, however, there was little difference in school attendance on the basis of student gender.

Figure 3-1: Average student attendance in primary schools on day of survey



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[17] About 3.4% of SC children of school going age (6-13 years) in rural India were estimated to be out of school in 2014. This number was even higher for ST children (4.8%). In comparison, only 3% of OBC children and 1.9% of children belonging to other social groups were out of school. The percentage of tribal children out of school in rural areas was even higher for Chhattisgarh (11.6%). (SRI and EdCIL.*2014. National Sample Survey of Estimation of Out-of-School Children in the Age 6-13 in India*. Draft report; available at http://ssa.nic.in/pabminutes-documents/NS.pdf).

[18] Our survey covered all secondary schools catering to the villages in our sample. In total, the RMSA questionnaire was asked of headmasters in 62 secondary schools, or nearly 1 in every 5 secondary schools in the four districts under study.

For two districts (Rajnandgaon and Surajpur), student attendance was measured at 3 distinct periods in time: 1) July 2015, 2) October 2015, and 3) February 2016. The results of these exercises (or spot surveys as we called them) are presented below. As is evident, attendance numbers recorded at different periods in time are mostly in line with each other and can be taken as a good approximation of the average annual attendance.

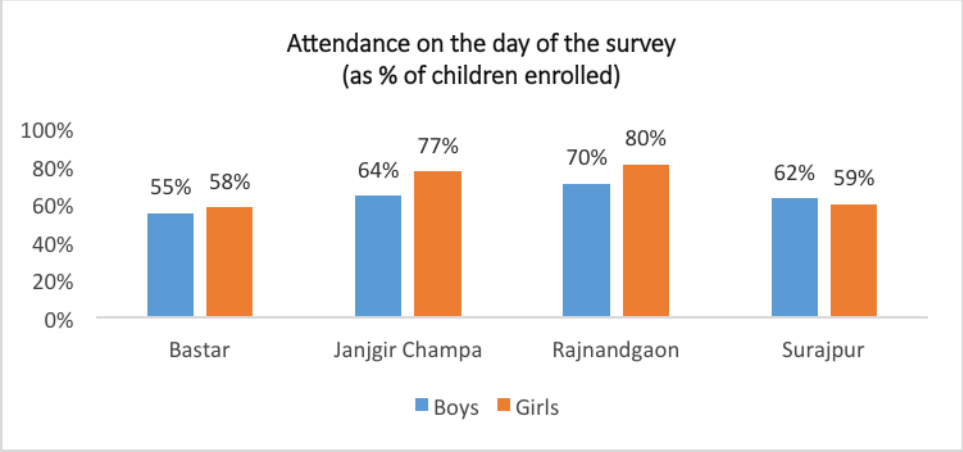
Table 3-6: Attendance in SSA schools remains similar throughout the year

	July 2015		October 2015		February 2016	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Rajnandgaon	86%	85%	83%	86%	86%	87%
Surajpur	67%	71%	56%	62%	69%	67%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey July 2015, Chhattisgarh Spot survey October 2015, Chhattisgarh Spot survey February 2016

In comparison, however, thin attendance was recorded in secondary schools (figure 3-2). A possible reason for low student attendance could be the large number of teaching posts that lie vacant in secondary schools (see later), which could potentially reduce student incentive to attend school on a regular basis. Bastar reported the lowest student attendance with only about a half of its secondary school students present in school on the day of the survey.

Figure 3-2: Low attendance of students in secondary classes



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

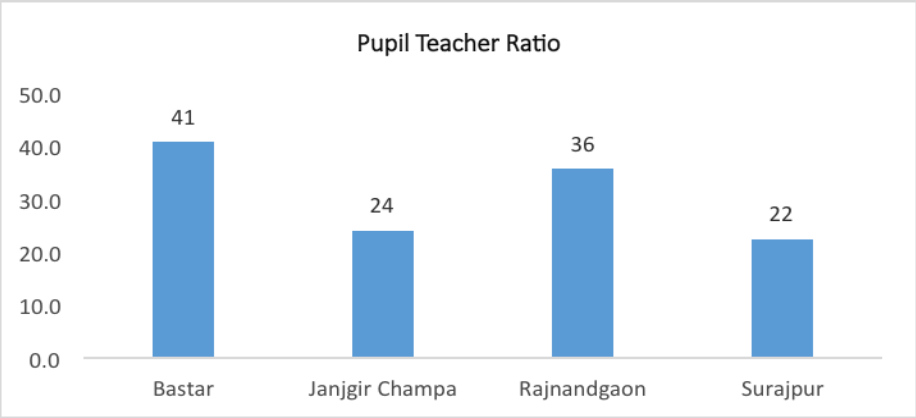
3.4 Teacher availability and attendance

The Pupil Teacher Ratio[19] in SSA schools was found to be well within RTE (30:1) and SSA (40:1) norms across all four districts surveyed – ranging from 23 in Bastar and Janjgir Champa (highest) to 19 in Surajpur. A relatively higher PTR in Bastar can be explained on account of low teacher recruitment in the district, which in turn is driven by unwillingness of teachers to be posted in the district. Janjgir Champa, on the other hand, is the most densely populated district in the state and thus faces higher enrollment numbers per school.

[19] PTR has been calculated by dividing the number of children enrolled by total number of teachers in the school (including regular, panchayat or contract teachers). In 2013-14, the average PTR for government schools in India was 26:1. (http://ssa.nic.in/rte-docs/Final_RTE_4th_Year.pdf).

The PTR in secondary schools, however, is significantly poorer with only 2 of the 4 districts meeting RMSA norms (30:1): the average PTR in Bastar is 41 (see figure 3-3). This may be seen as a direct impact of high teacher vacancies in the district. Challenges in the recruitment of qualified secondary school teachers are particularly significant in Bastar with many reluctant to go there. In multiple interviews with state and district level officials, we were told how Bastar was viewed by teachers as a "punishment posting".

Figure 3-3: Secondary Schools' PTR for Bastar and Rajnandgaon exceeded RMSA norm of 30 students to 1 teacher



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

While the State has found it tough to recruit teachers for its secondary schools, those that have been hired don't necessarily report in schools to teach. Measured as on the day of the survey visit, teacher absenteeism is high especially for subjects like Hindi, English, Science and Social Science, and more so in tribal districts. This is also true for primary school teachers where over 20% of all recruited school teachers were absent on the day of the main survey[20].

Curiously, the position of the laboratory assistant in secondary schools not only faces high vacancies (65%) but also significantly low attendance in places where the positions are filled (Table 3-7). While we cannot establish this with our primary data, absence of laboratory assistants might be correlated with absence of science teachers, poor teaching quality in the sciences (in general) and little emphasis on it.

Table 3-7: High absence of secondary school teachers on day of survey

Subject-wise absence of teachers on day of survey							
	Science	**Hindi**	**English**	**Sanskrit**	**Math**	**Social science**	**Laboratory assistant**
Bastar	8%	18%	0%	25%	0%	20%	50%
Janjgir Champa	8%	12%	0%	11%	9%	12%	36%
Rajnandgaon	13%	11%	14%	10%	0%	0%	30%
Surajpur	7%	8%	25%	14%	13%	13%	20%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[20] These numbers are in line with absenteeism rates observed by Kremer et al 2006. The authors made unannounced visits to Indian primary schools across 20 Indian states, and found about 25% or one in every four teachers were absent on the day of the survey (for Chhattisgarh, even higher teacher absenteeism was observed (30.6%). Available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPUBSERV/Resources/477250-1187034401048/ChaudhuryandothersMIA.pdf.

3.5 How does the school interact with the administration?

There are several key channels through which the administrative machinery interacts with government-run schools on a regular basis. We reviewed in our survey two such specific channels. At the first level, school-level management bodies are responsible for the formulation of a school development plan, which forms the basic tenet for school demands which are then sent upwards to the district and block officers. Our survey assessed whether this planning process was in fact in place and was functioning effectively. At the second level, the survey looked at the nature and frequency of the interaction between government schools and the administration. The district and block education officers in turn are responsible for inspecting all government, aided and recognized educational institutions under their area; inspection of books of accounts and other finance and procurement related issues in offices under their jurisdiction; monitoring and supervision of the work of headmasters; transfer, promotion and training of teaching and non-teaching staff (except staff from the state cadre); lifting of foodgrain at the district level for MDM; redressal of grievances of all teaching and non-teaching staff including review of pending court/pension cases; and calling upon and participating in regular meeting to have discussions on various aspects of education in the district.

This section presents an assessment of both these channels.

School-level committees and plans: Bottom-up planning forms the cornerstone of the implementation of both the SSA and RMSA. Parents, teachers and locally elected representatives are seen to have a critical role to play in the overall management of a school, coming together to form the School Management Committee (SMC) or the School Management Development Committee (SMDC). This SMC/ SMDC is expected to understand, prioritize and articulate the school's needs and demands in the form of a School Development Plan (SDP) or a School Improvement Plan (SIP)[21] which must be made annually. This SDP or SIP forms the lowest rung in the ladder of bottom-up planning and the most legitimate channel through which a school can regularly send its demands upwards to those that make decisions on how much money must be allocated against different school needs. In the event of the failure of this mechanism, it is no wonder that schools are often found to receive funds for which they have little use while important expenses remain under funded (see later, for example, the section on civil works).

Our survey found that while nearly all schools (primary and secondary) reported having an SMC/SMDC in place, about a half of those had made a school level plan in the last financial year[22]. This number, although in line with levels reported by other surveys,[23] needs to be treated with some skepticism. For one, the micro-planning process envisaged under the RTE requires that households in the catchment area to a

[21] The school management body is called the School Management Committee and the School Management Development Committee under the SSA and RMSA respectively. The school plan under each is called the SDP and the SIP, respectively.

[22] Often times, schools conflate a school development plan with the reporting requirements for DISE. To avoid this confusion in the field, the enumerators first asked the headmaster whether an SMC or SMDC was in place, date of its inception, number of meetings held etc, as the SMC is the body at the fulcrum of the school based planning process envisaged under the RTE Act (section 21). The question on the school development plan was then introduced as a follow-up question, with enumerators explaining it as a tool used by the SMC to put forth school needs to the administrative machinery above. Headmasters were also asked whether they had received any format to prepare the SDP.

[23] In a 2013 PAISA survey undertaken across districts in India, about 44% primary schools reported preparing an SDP.

neighborhood school also participate in the plan preparation. However, rarely did we hear of instances where such participation was elicited. Rather, the SDP was seen as being prepared mostly by a core team comprising headmasters and teachers, community leaders and a few, select parents. Since we did not interview any SMC/SMDC member, it is hard to say whether households, particularly those belonging to disadvantaged and weaker sections participated in the planning process.

At another level, even in schools where such plans had been made, there was an overwhelming sense of cynicism with the process. Not just school heads but also officials at the district level spoke of the futility of the exercise and emphasized that the bottom-up school plans, played little or no role in the final plan preparation at the district level , which was informed by DISE data rather than school specified priorities. Part of the reason could be that SMCs or SMDCs did not receive any clear guidelines or training; only 34% of the SSA schools surveyed across the four districts had received any training to make a school development plan. According to one headmaster interviewed, this set in motion a cycle where school-level committees and planning were seen as mostly irrelevant – as a mere checkbox that needed to be ticked. Little or no emphasis was placed on the school's actual needs and scarce government funds were not always disbursed or spent in an efficient manner.

Monitoring by government officers: Regular monitoring of state-funded schools is critical to their efficient and accountable functioning. A large, decentralized administrative machinery has been put in place to manage schools under both the SSA and RMSA. Under the SSA, particularly, positions have been created at the block and cluster level (BRCCs and CRCCs) to provide academic support. In addition, the offices of the BEO are to keep an eye on the functioning of the school to ensure teacher and student attendance, proper implementation of civil works and the serving of nutritious and hygienic mid-day meals, among other activities. The job description of the DEO entails that she/he inspect and supervise primary schools every month, test the work of teachers, assess pedagogical improvements by visiting classes etc. She/he is also expected to monitor the successful implementation of the mid-day meal scheme in schools, monitor civil works, and conduct monthly meetings with BRCCs and CRCCs (block and cluster level officials who are to serve as resource centers for giving all kinds of onsite academic support to the teachers at elementary level).

The survey found weak monitoring[24] of both SSA and secondary schools in all 4 districts. On average, when asked which of the following officials had visited the school for 'monitoring' purposes, 30% of SSA schools were found to not have been visited by a cluster or nodal official even once in FY 2014-15 (Table 3-8). Even when a cluster official had visited a school, an average of 6 months had passed since his/ her last visit (Table 3-9).

Table 3-8: Absence of monitoring visits by district and block officials; high percentage of SSA schools were never visited by cluster officials in Bastar during FY 2014-15

	District level official	Block level official	Cluster/Nodal official
Bastar	94%	44%	43%
Janjgir Champa	97%	32%	26%
Rajnandgaon	85%	33%	26%
Surajpur	85%	44%	20%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[24] A monitoring visit was recorded as such only if it was entered in the monitoring registers in schools.

Table 3-9: On average, 6 months since last visit by cluster official

	Average number of months since last monitoring visit			
	District official	Block official	Cluster official	Local official (panchayat/SMC)
Bastar	10.1	7.4	5.9	3.8
Janjgir Champa	9.4	8.7	6.1	5.1
Rajnandgaon	9.1	8.2	7.3	3.8
Surajpur	7.7	7.8	6.4	4.0

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Monitoring visits by the last-mile points of government are therefore not just few, but far between. Long distances and unavailability of public transport play some role in poor monitoring as may be seen in the case of Bastar, which performs the poorest. The average SSA school in Bastar is about 6 km away from the nearest bus stop, 23 km from the block office and 38 km from the district headquarters. However, even when the distances are comparatively shorter (as there is for Janjgir Champa when compared to Rajnandgaon), there is little difference between the two districts on parameters of monitoring.

Weak monitoring is also a problem for RMSA and RMSA-funded secondary schools in the state. Over half of all RMSA/ RMSA-funded schools surveyed, were never visited by a district official in 2014-15. The block has no financial role to play in RMSA, but the BEOs are responsible for monitoring. In Bastar, nearly 80% of schools had not been visited by a district official, 53% had not been visited by block officials and nearly 70% had not been visited by cluster officials who are responsible for providing academic support to schools. Low number of official visits did not seem to be a problem of Bastar alone. In Janjgir Champa and Surajpur too, nearly 4 in every 5 secondary schools surveyed had never been visited by a cluster official. In cases where officials had visited; a whole year had passed since their last visit (Table 3-11). Surajpur did significantly better in terms of time since last visit than the other three districts (Table 3-11).

Table 3-10: Large gaps in monitoring of secondary schools across districts

	Secondary schools never visited by			
	A district official	A block official	A cluster/nodal official	Panchayat /SDC member
Bastar	79%	53%	68%	47%
Janjgir Champa	69%	25%	81%	56%
Rajnandgaon	70%	60%	50%	50%
Surajpur	53%	53%	82%	71%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Table 3-11: More regular monitoring of secondary schools in Surajpur

	Average time elapsed since last monitoring visit (months) by a district official
Bastar	12.0
Janjgir Champa	9.6
Rajnandgaon	9.1
Surajpur	6.1

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Why is monitoring weak? Our interviews with officials suggest two explanations. First, those who are responsible for monitoring, work in a context of large distances, limited budgets for monitoring, no vehicles for the purpose of travelling etc. Interviews with district and block officers reveal that these are significant constraints to them not being able to visit schools as frequently as they should, or would like to. These problems are multiplied in tribal areas where access during rains is even more challenging.

Second, the division of powers within the administrative structure is not always clear. Let us take the case of DEOs monitoring teachers. As per the administrative rules of the state government, DEOs have within their purview the authority to hire and fire 'regular' teachers in schools i.e. teachers who fall within the purview of the education department. However, as we shall see in later sections, the numbers of regular teachers in the state are few; instead Chhattisgarh has had a tradition of hiring panchayat teachers through the panchayati raj department. These comprise the majority of the current teaching cadre in Chhattisgarh. In such a context, the DEO is faced with the responsibility of monitoring *all* teachers, without exercising any real disciplinary authority over a majority of them. In the event that they find panchayat teachers to be lax, they have no authority to impose punitive measures on them, say by cutting their salaries. Similarly, DEOs cannot effectively regulate civil works implementation in schools, which in the case of Chhattisgarh are carried out by bodies outside the education department, such as the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Rural Engineering Services (RES) (for larger civil works) and the Gram Panchayat (for smaller civil works). Thus, while they are answerable for the state and quality of infrastructure of schools in their district, they have limited powers to ensure that civil works implementation is carried out adequately.

This diffusion in powers to monitor vs powers to take action is in many ways a consequence of half-baked decentralization in the state. In principal the division of power makes sense. The Chhattisgarh government has placed important functional responsibilities related to teacher hiring and civil works with the Gram Panchayat. From the perspective of basic public finance principles, transaction intensive activities that can be best monitored at the local level ought to be devolved to that level. The Chhattisgarh education administration reflects precisely this principle. Devolution must come with greater accountability for performance. In this sense, empowering a higher level administrative authority (in this instance the DEO) with the power to monitor is also in keeping with first principles. However, in practice neither the DEO nor the Panchayat actually have any "sanctioning" authority. This in fact rests with the CEO Zilla Parishad (an administrator not elected representative). Consequently neither does the local accountability mechanism, implicit in the devolution of powers to local governments, function; nor does the ability of a higher administrative authority to actually monitor and enforce sanctions on school related activity, rendering the monitoring process toothless.

It is recognized that at the time of writing this report, the Government of Chhattsigarh has taken steps to address gaps in monitoring. A "Gunvatta Abhiyan" (or quality improvement mission) has been initiated by the education department to improve monitoring of schools including mandatory bi-annual visits to primary schools by officials. This should also be extended to secondary schools in the next few years. Impacts of these measures are yet to be seen, and need to be evaluated in the near future.

3.6 Challenges in SSA and RMSA implementation

3.6.1 Human Resource: Teacher vacancies, salary delays, overlapping accountability

Teacher vacancies: Our data suggest that one of the more significant challenges in the implementation of both the SSA and the RMSA in Chhattisgarh lie in the availability of human resource i.e. teachers. While the average teacher vacancy rate for SSA schools (calculated as vacant positions as a proportion of sanctioned posts) is about 20% (Table 3-12), vacancy rates for secondary schools in the sample are staggeringly high - particularly for subjects like science, mathematics and English (Table 3-13). The problem is particularly acute in Bastar – with not only the highest proportion of teacher vacancies in primary schools (27%) but also only half or fewer filled positions in the core subjects at the secondary level. Secondary school vacancies are lowest in Janjgir Champa for most subjects.

Table 3-12: Highest primary school teacher vacancies in Bastar, lowest in Rajnandgaon

	Percentage of vacant primary school posts, of total sanctioned posts
Bastar	27%
Janjgir Champa	19%
Rajnandgaon	12%
Surajpur	17%
Sample average	20%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey, 2015

Table 3-13: Highest vacancies for Science, English, Math teachers and laboratory assistants in secondary schools; Bastar fares the worst

	Science	Hindi	English	Sanskrit	Maths	Social science	Laboratory assistant
Bastar	50%	31%	63%	38%	79%	35%	47%
Janjgir Champa	19%	22%	21%	25%	15%	38%	31%
Rajnandgaon	38%	25%	42%	0%	36%	17%	33%
Surajpur	25%	14%	38%	22%	33%	0%	58%
Total	33%	23%	42%	24%	43%	23%	44%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey, 2015

There are multiple reasons for this shortfall of teachers. In the case of SSA, the shortfall has been compounded by the fact that the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) – a necessary part of teacher recruitment – has not been conducted in the State on a regular basis[25]. The exam was last conducted in the state two years prior to the survey.

Before we unpack the reasons for this delay, the nature of teacher recruitment in Chhattisgarh needs to be described. In Chhattisgarh, there are two cadres through which teachers are hired (both for SSA and RMSA). The first are known as regular teachers who are hired through the education department. Their salaries thus flow directly from the education department. The second cadre called shiksha karmis in the case of SSA and panchayat shikshaks in RMSA are hired through the panchayats, effectively the CEO Zilla Panchayat's office[26]. Their salaries flow from the SSA and RMSA budgets respectively. Hiring teachers in this

[25] All teachers must obtain more than the relevant cut-off of marks required in their secondary examination, must possess B,Ed/D.Ed certificates and must pass the TET.

[26] Shiksha karmis or panchayat shikshaks who have a post graduate diploma are referred to as panchayat shikshak vyakhyatas.

cadre has been the dominant form of teacher recruitment in Chhattisgarh. In SSA for instance, about 82% of teachers in all schools visited were shiksha karmis, and in RMSA, about 80% of all teachers were panchayat shikshaks (Tables 3-14 and 3-15).

Table 3-14: Most teaching posts occupied by Panchayat teachers in primary schools; regular teachers a dying cadre

	Regular teachers in SSA schools visited (%)	Panchayat teachers in SSA schools visited (%)
Bastar	17%	83%
Janjgir Champa	10%	90%
Rajnandgaon	25%	75%
Surajpur	19%	81%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Table 3-15: Panchayat teachers dominate in secondary schools as well, overwhelmingly so in Surajpur

	Regular teachers in secondary schools visited (%)	Panchayat teachers in secondary schools visited (%)
Bastar	16%	84%
Janjgir Champa	13%	87%
Rajnandgaon	19%	81%
Surajpur	4%	96%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Salary scales of shiksha karmis/panchayat shikshaks are significantly lower than those of regular teachers. In SSA, a shiksha karmi in our sample received on average about Rs. 14,500 per month for his or her services, while a regular teacher received Rs. 31,000 per month. In RMSA, an average panchayat shikshak in our sample received slightly over Rs. 17,000 per month as salary compared to regular teachers, who received more than Rs. 38,000 as their monthly salary.

In our meetings with SSA and RMSA officials in Raipur, we were told that shiksha karmis and panchayat shikshaks had staged protests around their low salaries, thereby leading to delays in their overall posting. The protests had escalated and in fact had led to a High Court stay order on postings through TET. The matter had not been resolved at the time the survey went to the field, and the State was still withholding orders to conduct the TET[27]. Department officials had been unable to resolve the stalemate as it was a state matter.

In the case of RMSA, the shortfall is particularly acute as the available pool of qualified teachers itself is small, particularly in tribal districts. Thus the problem of teacher vacancies is felt most acutely in the tribal areas. Even when the TET had been conducted, caste or tribe specific reservations coupled with a limited pool of qualified teachers to begin with meant that there was very little actual recruitment. Districts reported, for instance, that it had been specially challenging to fill RMSA teacher posts reserved for SC candidates.

[27] There has been a recent announcement to conduct TET in 2016. In 2013, the Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh had also issued orders making the salary of Shiksha Karmis, on completing eight years of their service, on par with the State Government teachers. But we could not establish whether this had had an impact on the salaries of shiksha karmis as we did not ask, for each shiksha karmi, the number of years they had completed in service.

Teacher vacancies coupled with their absenteeism impacts overall teacher 'availability'. In the case of SSA, for example, 80% of teachers had been hired against the sanctioned posts. Of these, 80% were reporting to work (see numbers on absenteeism earlier). This meant that on average, an SSA school had only 6 of the 10 teachers required, available to teach on any given day. It was not surprising therefore to see multi-grade teaching in about 84% of primary schools in the survey sample. Given that the average number of sanctioned posts in an SSA school in Chhattisgarh is 3 (only schools in the more populous Janjgir Champa had more sanctioned posts - 4) and the number of classes to be taught are 5, multi-grade teaching in primary schools is inevitable.

However, teacher availability is a much more serious concern in secondary schools. Take the case of Bastar which had filled only 50% of science teachers' posts. Of these, 8% were found to be absent on the day of the survey, implying that only about 4 science teachers of the required 10 were 'available' to teach. Given that not all teachers were hired and/or were turning up to work, multi-grade teaching was found even in secondary schools: 26% schools in Bastar and 30% in Rajnandgaon had students from different grades sitting in the same classroom at the time of the survey (Table 3-16). Headmasters in secondary schools told our survey team how poor teacher availability impacts quality of teaching, and inevitably student attendance, as shown above in our survey data (see figure 3-2 on secondary school student attendance).

Table 3-16: Significant multi-grade teaching in secondary schools in Bastar and Rajnandgaon

	Percentage of Secondary Schools with students from different grades sitting in the same classroom (at the time of the survey)
Bastar	26%
Janjgir Champa	6%
Rajnandgaon	30%
Surajpur	12%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Some districts have made attempts to fill gaps in teacher availability. In Surajpur, for example, the district administration has brought in teachers from larger secondary schools in the vicinity to teach in RMSA schools. Using alternative (Panchayat) funds, the district administration has also recruited young, qualified people for short periods of time to ensure teaching continues in schools. However, district officers themselves question the sustainability of such an effort given the paucity of funds under alterative heads. The State had also announced similar recruitment of guest teachers or "atithi shikshaks" on a short-term basis to close this gap but no such teachers had been recruited in any of the sample schools at the time of the survey.

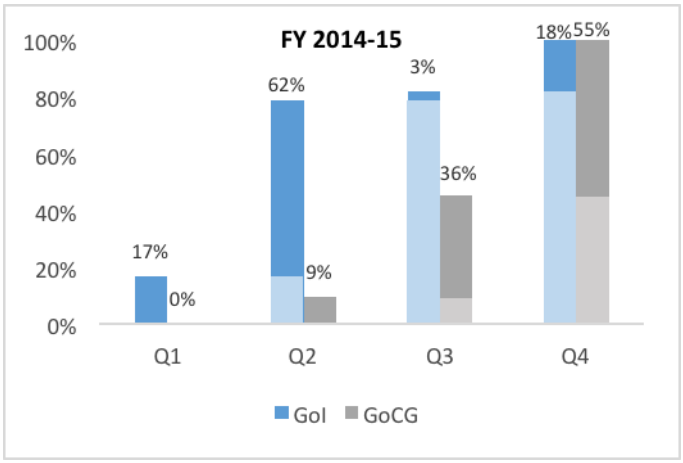
Salary delays: Even when teachers are recruited, our data suggest considerable delays in payments of their salaries. Let's take the case of RMSA first. While salaries for regular teachers under RMSA were received mostly on time (with a few odd cases of delays by a month), at the time of the survey (July-August 2015), 70-80% of panchayat shikshaks in RMSA had received their last salary in June, with a lag of 1-2 months. That is, most salaries received (in June) were for the months of April or even March.

The problem appeared to be so severe that in nearly all interviews conducted in the field (at the district and sub-district level), salary delays for panchayat shikshaks in RMSA were an overwhelming point of discussion

with many suggesting that there was deep reluctance among teachers to be recruited under the scheme on the account of the significant salary delays that RMSA had come to be associated with. Salary delays also stretched to salaries of district administrative staff recruited under RMSA, causing many such positions to remain unfilled.

While the general understanding is that delays in payments occur because the Government of India (GoI) does not release its RMSA funds on time, data gathered from the State RMSA office suggests delays on account of the State as well. In FY 2014-15, for example, the State released 55% of its funds to the State Implementation Society (SIS) only by the 4th quarter of the financial year; while GoI had released about 80% of its contribution by the second quarter itself. While RMSA officials were unable to cite any specific reason for delays in fund release at the state level, delays could be explained by a change in routing of funds within the state. Since 2013-14, funds received from the Government of India are also routed through state budgets. In other words, the Centre's share goes first to the state budget and then the state releases the total amount along with the state share. The change in routing could account for the delay in fund release by the state, having a cascading effect in turn on payments like salaries. We see similar delays in the release of funds for ICDS.

Figure 3-4: Chhattisgarh released 50% of its fund share under RMSA only by Q4 in FY2014-15

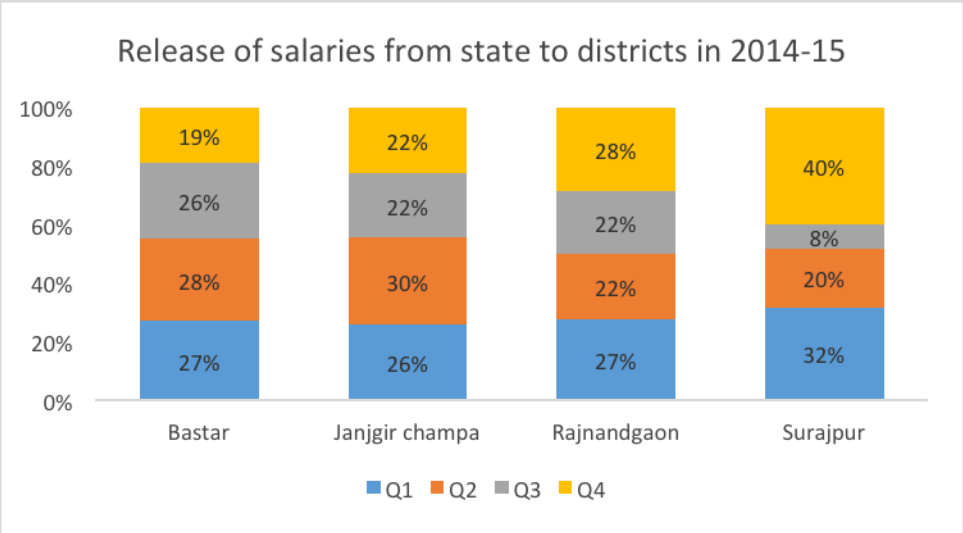


Source: RMSA Office, GoCG

Once funds are received by the SIS, there do not appear to be any major delays in their disbursement to the districts. Teacher salaries form the largest component of funding for the RMSA (75%)[28] and are (mostly) released from the SIS to the districts on time (the only exception seems to be Surajpur, which received 40% of RMSA funds only in quarter 4 of FY 2014-15).

[28] Data has been taken from the PAB meeting minutes for Chhattisgarh, 2014-15.

Figure 3-5: Bulk of RMSA salaries released by the SIS to districts on time; except in Surajpur



Source: RMSA Office, GoCG

Delays in teacher salaries were also common under the SSA, particularly for the shiksha karmis[29]. As in RMSA, most regular teachers associated with the SSA schools in their sample had received their salaries on time, with a few odd cases who reported delay of a month. In contrast, it was common for the average Shiksha Karmi teaching in an SSA school to get 2-3 months of his/ her salary together. At the time of the survey (July-August 2015), about 60% of all shiksha karmis in SSA schools had received their last salary in June, another 18% had received it in May, and 11% in July. For over half of all shiksha karmis, salaries had been received by a lag of more than a month.

Moreover, delays are felt in other payments, such as those of Travel and Dearness Allowance (TA/DA). In the survey, over 70% of SSA teachers in Janjgir Champa and Surajpur said they did not receive their TA/DA in FY 2014-15 (Table 3-17). Similarly delays in TA/DA were seen for RMSA, especially in Surajpur (Table 3-18).

Table 3-17: More than 70% primary school teachers in Janjgir Champa and Surajpur did not receive their TA/DA in FY 2014-15

	Did not receive	Received	Not applicable	Not available
Bastar	46%	33%	17%	4%
Janjgir Champa	74%	26%		
Rajnandgaon	50%	48%		2%
Surajpur	74%	25%		1%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[29] We noticed similar delays in salaries of shiksha karmis in our PAISA district studies carried out in July-August 2013 across several states. Delays were particularly acute in Bihar, with shiksha karmis in districts like Nalanda and Purnea receiving their last salary in May, or even April, suggesting a delay of 2-3 months.

Table 3-18: More than 70% secondary school teachers in Surajpur did not receive their TA/DA in FY 2014-15

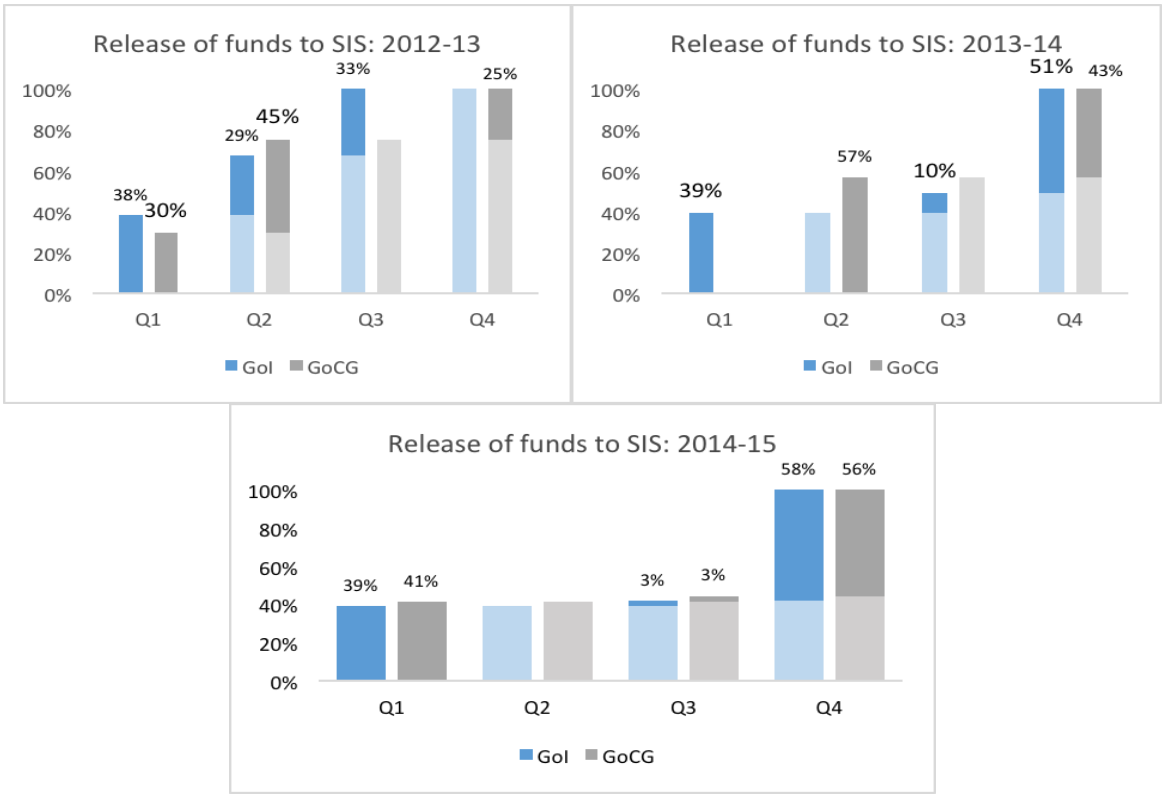
	Did not receive	Received	Not applicable	Not available
Bastar	26%	21%	42%	11%
Janjgir Champa	44%	56%		
Rajnandgaon	30%	60%	10%	
Surajpur	71%	23%	6%	

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

In a situation where qualified teachers are already scarce, the importance of regular and effective teacher training is obvious. However, inefficiencies such as delays in the payment of training-related TA/DA often create disincentives around such training programmes.

Like in RMSA, delays in such payments could be potentially explained by delays in funds releases under SSA which have in fact become worse in recent years. The graphs below show that both GoI and GoCG released over half their funds to the SIS only in quarter 4 of FY 2014-15 (figure 3-6). This is a trend that seems to have persisted in FY 2015-16. In an annual exercise of SSA budget performance that Accountability Initiative undertakes, we find that in FY 2015-16, Chhattisgarh had released only 37% of its approved budgets to the state SIS by September 2015. Other states fared better e.g. Karnataka had released 52%, Rajasthan 46% and Madhya Pradesh 44%[30].

Figure 3-6: Fund release timings under SSA have worsened in recent years

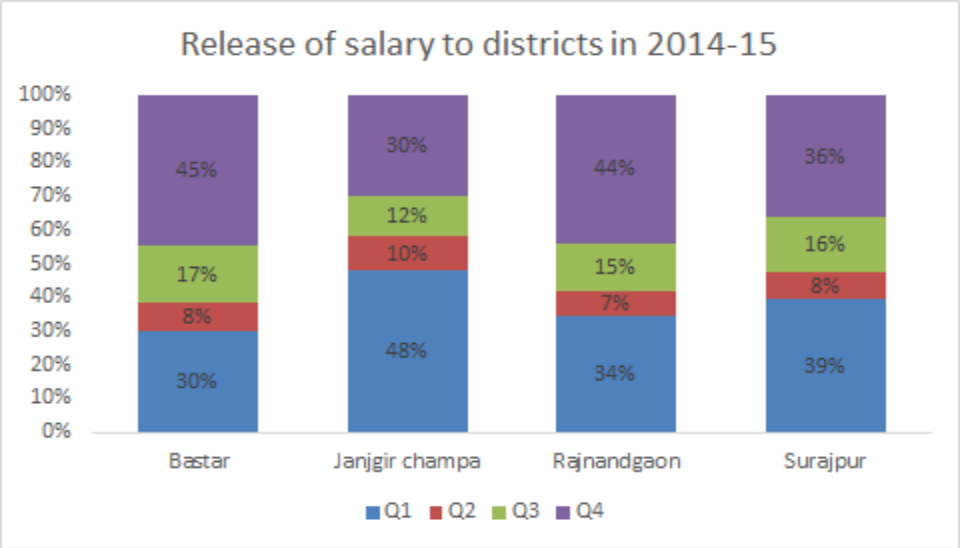


Source: SSA Office, GoCG

[30] http://cprindia.org/sites/default/files/policy-briefs/SSA.pdf

Once the funds are received in the SIS, they are further delayed in their disbursement to the districts. The chart below shows that 30-45% of SSA salary funds (which form 40%[31] of total SSA funding) were released to districts by the SIS only by the end of FY 2014-15.

Figure 3-7: Bulk of SSA salaries released in Q4 of FY2014-15 from state to districts



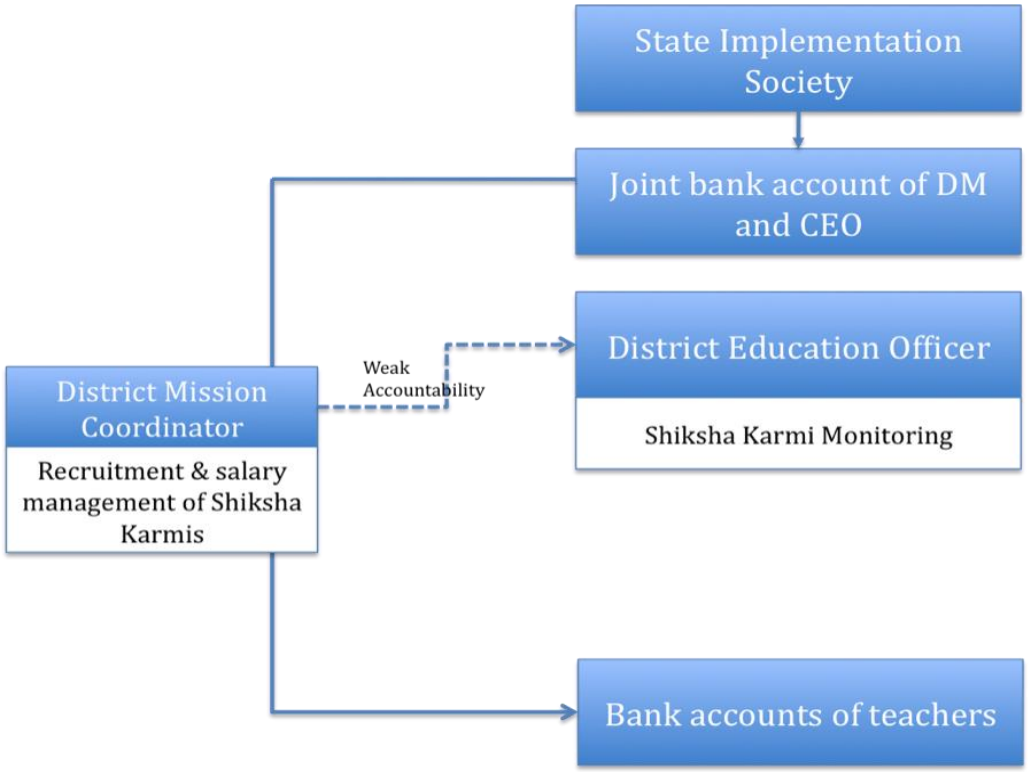
Source: SSA Office, GoCG

Cadre of teachers, accountability structures and unionization: As suggested earlier, Shiksha karmis are not some para-teaching staff, but a permanent cadre of teaching staff that the State is now moving towards as the regular teaching cadre is being phased out. The average regular teacher's salary is more than twice that of the average shiksha karmi. The most fundamental way, however, in which shiksha karmis differ from regular teachers is in their overall recruitment and management – creating real implications for the ability of the administration to monitor and regulate this resource.

The office of the CEO, Zila (District) Panchayat is the authority for the appointment, promotion, and suspension of all shiksha karmis in the State[32]. This is done through the office of a DMC (District Mission Coordinator), designated to implement SSA at the district level. All the powers related to the financial, administrative and hiring/firing of shiksha karmis rests with the zilla panchayat, which is headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO)[33] (figure 3-8). While the District Education Office (DEO) can make recommendations in these matters, the overall authority (including those of salary payments) lies with the CEO's office. At the same time, and as mentioned in the section on monitoring, the DEO remains responsible for the overall monitoring of the shiksha karmis, just as he is for regular teachers. In this context, DEOs often find themselves unable to hold shiksha karmis accountable. With little or no powers to withhold salary, fire or impose any other punitive measures, DEOs struggle to perform this critical function.

[31] Data has been taken from the PAB meeting minutes for Chhattisgarh, 2014-15.
[32] Shiksha karmis fall under 3 grades: 1, 2 and 3. Grades 1 & 2 are recruited by the zila panchayat while grade 3 shiksha karmis are recruited by the janpad panchayat.
[33] This is a system followed in many parts of the country and was part of an attempt to empower local governments as well as make the teaching cadre more accountable.

Figure 3-8: Shiksha Karmi Salary Payment structure under SSA



While the DEO is surpassed in this chain, the office of the DMC too, although entrusted with district-level scheme implementation, serves only as a pass through for routing salaries, and is devoid of any powers to hire or fire the shiksha karmis, which rests entirely with the CEO, Zilla Panchayat. In sum, and though responsible on paper, the DEO and the DMC are both side lined, in the process acting as little more than post boxes.

"We don't have the powers to remove or change one CAC. We are only moving files; we have no power".

- A DMC

"No file of the SSA is cleared without the CEO and DC's sign".

- An officer in the district education department

Teachers in Chhattisgarh, like anywhere else in the country, are not only a scarce resource, but also a resource that is challenging to discipline and manage[34]. Teacher recruitments face frequent interference. Shiksha karmis need to fulfil a number of minimum requirements e.g. obtaining a minimum percentage of marks in their secondary school examination (a cut-off that differs if the candidate holds a B.Ed/D.Ed) and passing the TET. However, with the TET not being conducted (see above), many candidates were heard of

[34] This is true of many states. See for instance Kingdon and Teal (2010). The authors use differences in student marks across subjects to identify within-pupil variation in achievement and find that union membership of the teacher is associated with reduced pupil achievement. Also see Kingdon and Muzammil (2003), *The Political Economy of Education in India: Teacher Politics in Uttar Pradesh*, Oxford Policy Institute.

influencing zilla and janpad panchayat heads for jobs. Court cases of shiksha karmis approaching the courts for their selection and promotion, despite not fulfilling the aforesaid requirements were common. In several of such cases, the support of shiksha karmi unions and politicians was implicit.

Managing teachers becomes even more difficult in an environment where they are unionized. A DEO spoke about how strong Shiksha karmi unions in his district were and how they often hosted *dharnas* to put forth their demands. He went on to say that such pressure meant that candidates were often selected for their political affiliations and not qualifications, creating real problems for teaching quality in the classrooms[35].

"The system itself has failed. If the right candidate is selected for the right post, everything would work smoothly".

– A district education officer

"If any complaint is received against a teacher and the CEO removes him, we immediately receive a call from a politician saying, 'he is my man; you should keep him'. It is better to just shut down SSA!"

– A district education officer

In other field level interviews too, we heard refrains of how politicized teacher recruitment and postings were, and how they were driven by strong lobbying. In Rajnandgaon, in fact, we were told that all new hiring had been stayed by the courts following a legal dispute between the government and the teachers' union.

The strong unions of shiksha karmis in Chhattisgarh need to be interpreted in light of the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) that was implemented by the undivided state of Madhya Pradesh in 1994. Designed specifically to address the issue of access to schools, more so in tribal areas, the scheme guaranteed that on receiving a written request from the Panchayat, the EGS program will provide a school within 90 days. It worked on the principle of hiring teachers from within communities (on the basis of recommendations from the panchayat and parents), who were then trained by the education department of the government. The cadre of Shiksha Karmis in Chhattisgarh therefore has political roots that run much deeper (and longer) than in other states.

The existing education governance systems in Chhattisgarh emerged in this context. The cadre of shiksha karmis was created as an attempt to devolve both power and accountability to the local community via the Panchayat, but neither power nor accountability[36] in any meaningful manner has been created at the level of the Panchayats. In fact, the authority seems to have moved from one administrative office (DEO) to another (CEO Zilla Parishad), with little or no devolution down to the community level. The CEO's office is constrained by multiple other responsibilities and teacher management and monitoring is not at the top of its agenda. As the officer in-charge of all education related activities in the district, the DEO's office continues to be responsible for teacher monitoring but finds itself with no adequate powers to handle it.

[35] It is interesting to note that at the village level, we heard contrasting opinions, with many teachers and headmasters complaining how their unions were not active enough. They used delays in their salaries as an example to illustrate the ineffectiveness of the unions to push forth the cause of teachers.

[36] While our study is constrained by the fact that we did not speak to any Panchayat members directly, we heard no mention of their role as monitors or managers of shiksha karmis in our interviews with other stakeholders. No one in the administrative hierarchy views the Panchayat as a monitor of teachers. The teachers don't view themselves as accountable to the Panchayat either.

3.6.2 Civil works: Status and Challenges in Implementation

Gaps in comparison to norms: The second important challenge in the implementation of SSA and RMSA is in the creation of infrastructure. This is ironic given the enormous emphasis placed on putting in place a functioning, comfortable school building with all basic amenities in the RTE. Seven years hence, and gaps, albeit small for some facilities, remain.

Civil works form a significant portion of allocation and spending under SSA, with 19%[37] of funds allocated to it. No allocation was made for civil works under RMSA in 2014-15. However, an analysis of the budget numbers and PAB minutes over the years for the schemes – as well as data from the field - reveal that the State has consistently faced difficulties in the spending of civil works funds and the building of infrastructure on the ground.

The tables cited earlier in Section 3.1 capture the status of primary and secondary school infrastructure in the four districts at the time of the survey. Under the RTE Act, all primary school buildings must meet a set of key norms and standards of infrastructure. These range from safe and adequate drinking water facilities to arrangements for securing the school building with a boundary wall or fencing. With the understanding that these are important for the functioning of a school, both primary and secondary schools were evaluated on these (and a few additional) parameters in the survey.

The survey found that Chhattisgarh is yet to meet some key infrastructure norms under the RTE Act with some shortfalls being particularly large. On average, about 40% of the primary schools surveyed did not have a usable toilet on their premises. There are still over 20% of schools with no usable hand-pump/ tap or other drinking water facility; over half without a playground; and nearly 70% without a complete boundary wall (see Table 3-1 earlier).

Of the four districts, Bastar ranks the lowest on infrastructure provisioning in primary schools. In the State's secondary schools, however, Surajpur does worse than Bastar (see Table 3-2 earlier). Less than 20% of its secondary schools have a computer lab and only 35% have a usable toilet on their premises. The district that most consistently outperforms the other three on school infrastructure (both primary and secondary) is Rajnandgaon. However, boundary walls and usable toilets for both boys and girls remain scarce across almost all districts, for both primary and secondary schools.

Gaps in comparison to demand: In addition to what was observed and already existed in schools, the survey also asked questions on any actual construction that may have taken place in the schools in the last two financial years (FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15) and if there had been any demands made by the school in this regard. This was done to assess gaps (if any) between what a school needs and what gets approved and constructed in schools.

While the data in secondary schools was too scant to make any meaningful assertions, the following key points can be made about the state-run primary schools in Chhattisgarh.

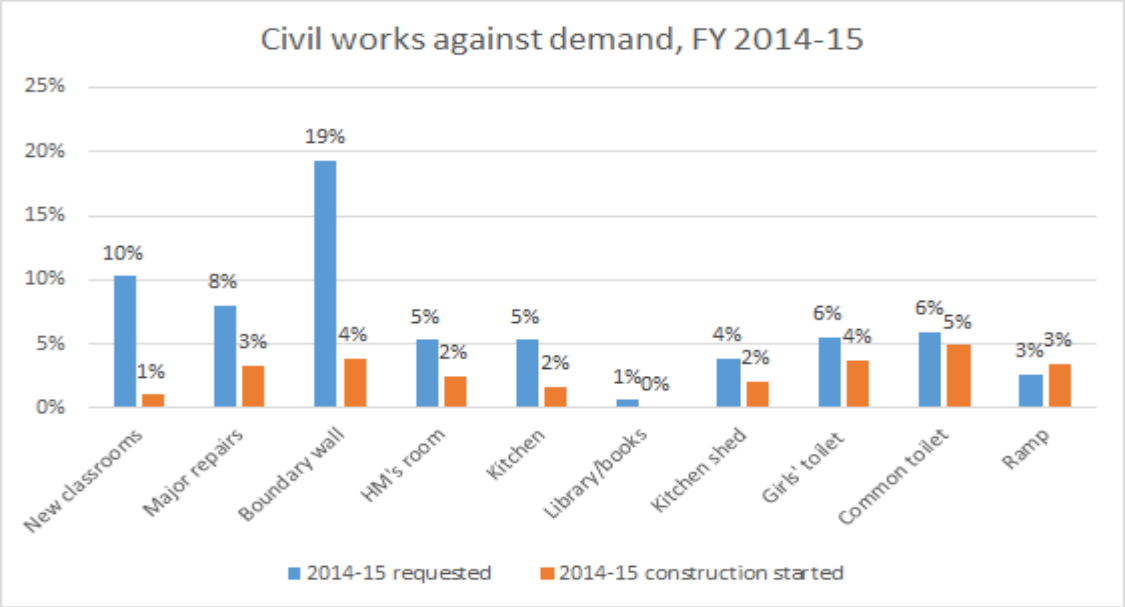
First, very little actual construction work was carried out in the State in the last two financial years. The real surge in putting up school infrastructure that began with the RTE Act (2009) appears to be waning. Most habitations across the country now have a primary school and governments are grappling with challenges that come next, such as how to ensure children who come to school are learning. At the same time,

[37] Data has been taken from the PAB meeting minutes for Chhattisgarh, 2014-15.

however, large gaps remain between schools that exist on the ground and schools that were envisaged as part of the RTE Act. Also, all infrastructure is subject to routine wear and tear and requires effort and investments to keep it in a usable condition.

Second, there exist large gaps between what a school needs and thus demands (through a letter of request, insertion in the school development plan or other formal channels) and what a school receives from the administration – i.e. what is approved and then actually constructed. This may be understood better in the context of earlier observations on poor school-level planning (only about half the schools in the sample made an SDP in FY 2014-15). In such a scenario, schools do not fully utilize the existing channels to communicate their needs in a timely manner to those that make decisions about spending. This creates a system where even those that do use these channels are ignored, as the overall bottom-up planning exercise is not considered with much seriousness. District plans (and subsequently the state plans) are often made using DISE data and based on the senior officers' own assessments of what may or may not be needed. Couple this with the fact that many schools are not visited by block and district officials for routine monitoring visits – and there is a near-total disconnect between what a school receives and what a school actually needs.

Figure 3-9: Large gap between demand and sanction for construction of boundary walls, new classrooms and major repairs (SSA)



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Figure 3-9 above shows that:

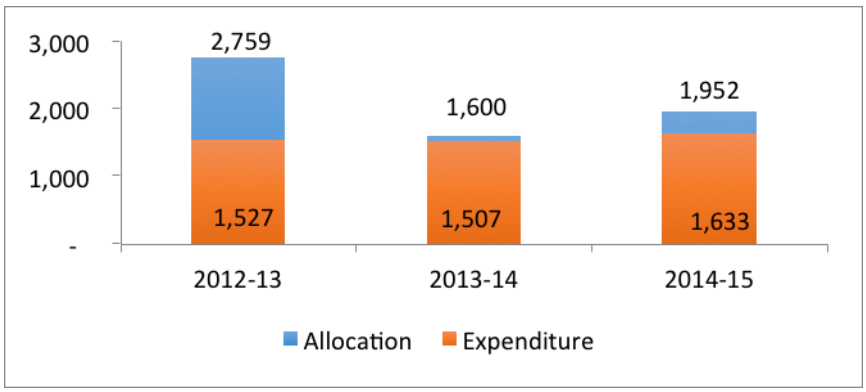
(1) Only a small proportion of schools in the sample even put forth a demand/ request for any civil works. In the context of large gaps in existing infrastructure, this must be viewed with concern.

(2) There is a substantial gap between the demand and supply of civil works at the school level – the probability of a school receiving a new classroom was 6% in 2014-15 and 16% in 2013-14, given that the school had requested it.

Decline in (overall) spending on civil works: While schools not putting forth their demands or not having them met is a source of concern, inability to spend what is allocated is another challenge. A very small proportion of SSA schools in our sample had any civil works carried out in the last two financial years– a finding that is in line with State budget numbers and PAB meeting minutes over the last few years.

An analysis of SSA allocations in the last three years shows that allocations for SSA, overall, have significantly declined since FY 2012-13 (figure 3-10). The SSA PAB Minutes[38] (FY2013-14) note that decreased allocations in FY 2013-14 were a result of no new civil works approvals in the financial year as much remained pending from previous years. Large amounts of civil work funds lie unspent and are being carried forward. PAB 2015-16 further observes that civil works remain pending, particularly in areas affected by left-wing extremism.

Figure 3-10: Reduction in (overall) SSA allocations (in Rs. crores)



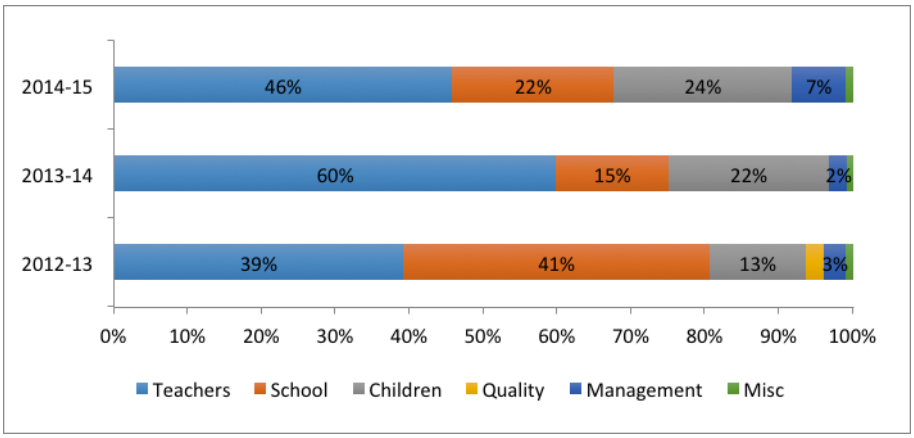
Source: SSA Office, GoCG

The chart below (figure 3-11) uses standard PAISA methodology to assess the share of SSA allocations that are made towards six core components: (1) Teachers (teacher salaries and training); (2) Schools (civil works – new construction, repair and maintenance; school grants); (3) Children (student entitlements such as uniforms, text books and scholarships); (4) Quality (any initiatives directly relevant to quality of education); (5) Management (overall administration and management of schools); and (6) Miscellaneous.

Allocations towards "Schools" have nearly halved since FY 2012-13 – from 41% in FY 2012-13 to 22% in FY 2014-15. This decline needs to be assessed in light of two concurrent developments. First, Government of India allocation for SSA itself has been declining in the past few years by about Rs. 2000 crores between 2013-14 and 2014-15 and another Rs. 2000 crores between 2014-15 and 2015-16. Second, and despite Chhattisgarh not having met its RTE infrastructure norms, the State has failed to carry out its allocated civil works, creating a build-up of pending works. The second chart (figure 3-12) below shows that even when allocations to civil works and school grants fell, only 8% of all spending was made under the head. Our survey data suggest that expenditure on school grants remained more or less the same (and grants were released in full), which leads one to believe that it was expenditure on civil works that declined.

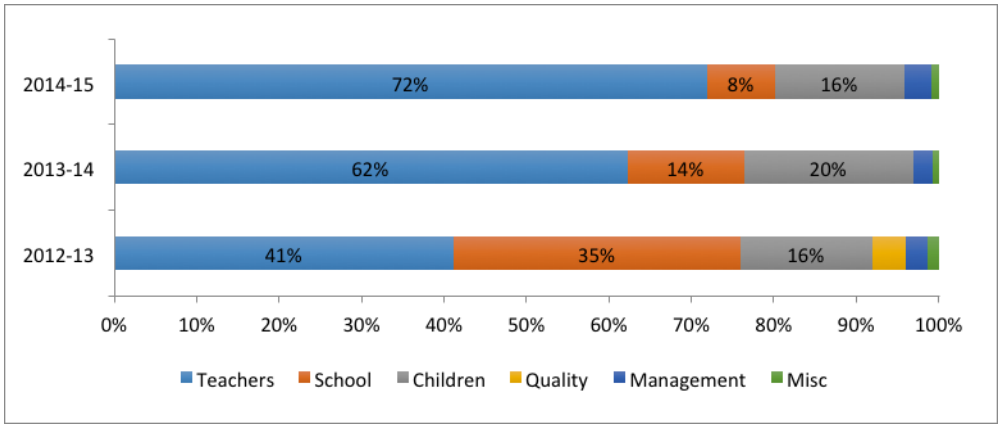
[38] At the National level, the Project Approval Board (PAB) is an empowered body assigned with full financial powers to approve plans and sanction budget.

Figure 3-11: Reduction in SSA allocations for civil works and school grants



Source: Calculated from AWP&B documents available on SSA portal.

Figure 3-12: Reduction in expenditure on civil works



Source: Calculated from AWP&B documents available on SSA portal.

A similar decline is seen in RMSA allocations between FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15, the two years for which data are available (see Figure 3-13). The following extracts from PAB minutes for 2013-14 and 2014-15 explain the reason for decline.

PAB minutes, 2013-14

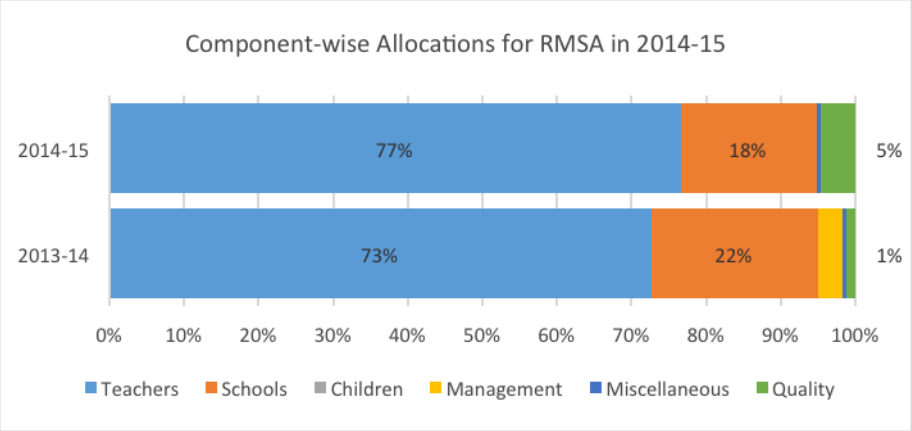
"Progress of implementation of civil works is found to be slow….It is seen that the works sanctioned during 2009-10 have been completed and those sanctioned in 2010-11 are at various stages of completion. The works sanctioned in 2011-12 are yet to be started except teachers' quarters. The State assured to complete 75% of civil works by December, 2013…PAB emphasized that in view of the limited availability of funds, past liabilities have to be liquidated first and fresh approvals have to be linked to performance and the commitment and capacity of the State to complete civil works... Hence, it is proposed that the cost of civil works may not be provided to the State."

PAB minutes, 2014-15

"Progress of implementation of civil works is found to be slow. A huge spillover of 73% of approved civil works amounting to more than Rs 1000 cr is observed…The proposal of the State for upgradation of 344 two section schools to the secondary level was considered by the PAB and in view of huge spillover of 73% of civil works, the State was advised to first complete the pending civil works and liquidate past liabilities

and then revert with fresh proposal…The proposal of the State for strengthening 552 existing secondary schools and construction of 60 teachers' quarters was considered by the PAB and in view of huge spillover of civil works against earlier approvals the State was advised to first complete the pending civil works and liquidate past liabilities before seeking fresh sanctions….The State was advised to take up the civil works under RMSA core component and to surrender the remaining amount if no work has been undertaken. Detail to be shared within a month, failing which the approval for 2013-14 to that extent would stand revoked. In view of the lack of progress, new components proposed by State were not considered for approval."

Figure 3-13: Allocations for civil works under RMSA decreased to 18% in 2014-15



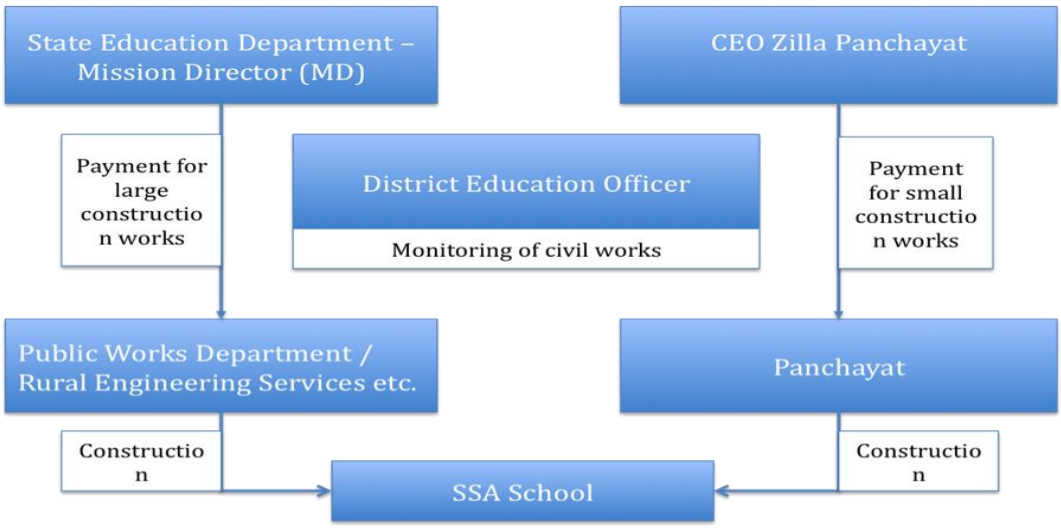
Source: AWP&B documents available on RMSA portal, MHRD

This inability to spend civil works funds under both the SSA and RMSA is a reflection of practical challenges in carrying out construction in the schools. These are best understood in the context of the process of civil works implementation under the two schemes. For any civil works under both the SSA and RMSA, Chhattisgarh has a model that uses external agencies for construction. These agencies typically range from the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Rural Engineering Services (RES) to the Gram Panchayat for smaller civil works[39](see figure 3-14). Once a construction activity is approved, say the building of an additional classroom, the agency is contracted to carry out this task and payments to it are made directly, at the state level (in case of the RES or PWD) or through the offices of the CEO, Zilla Panchayat (for smaller works to be carried out by panchayats)[40]. At no point does the civil works money enter a school's bank account, let alone be routed through the DEO's office.

[39] Only the PWD carries out RMSA civil works. The PWD then sub contract the works out to local, private builders and contractors.

[40] Since the RTE has long been in place, most large civil works under SSA have either been completed or sanctioned already to the RES or the PWD. Most civil works now being sanctioned are being given to the panchayats, as these are usually of a project value of less than Rs. 8 lakhs – the funds are routed through the CEO, zilla panchayat and paid directly to the Panchayat.

Figure 3-14: Civil Works Implementation in SSA Schools



The DEO's office and the school being out of the loop on civil works construction has implications on their ability to monitor what goes on the ground. As figure 3-14 suggests, the DEO and his office have no role to play in the approval and disbursement of payments for civil works. They only need to monitor the civil works. However, as suggested above by monitoring data, DEO monitoring itself is sparse. Only a few district-level officers even visit schools[41]. Yet, the DEO remains the primary authority responsible for monitoring the state and quality of civil works related to education in a district. In the field interviews conducted, DEOs reported that this "authority" or "responsibility" is meaningless in the absence of any real financial and punitive powers. Even the contractors working in the schools know that and their monitoring visits are rarely taken seriously. Sometimes, DEOs file FIRs for incomplete works or poor quality but it often not enough to improve performance.

> "Steps are taken to recover money, FIRs are lodged, but this doesn't help complete the work".
>
> - A district level officer

What about the schools themselves? In principle, the schools are the most important stakeholders in the process and are the most deeply affected by the civil works being undertaken. We saw in the previous section that the works being undertaken are rarely in alignment with school needs. Further, the schools' approval on the completion status or quality of construction is not sought before final payments are made to construction agencies. Instead, contractors come in, build sub-standard classrooms or toilets, and leave. Many school heads said that to begin with, they aren't even sure if and when a particular civil work has been approved for their school. Only once the construction agency begins work in the school that the school management receives any information on it. Once construction starts, the school head has no role to play in its monitoring or supervision. Even though the parents and community at large views the HM/ Principal responsible for the quality of construction in schools, they routinely expressed helplessness at being able to hold the construction agency responsible in any manner.

41 The survey did not gather data on monitoring of school level facilities by engineers. Thus, even in cases where district officials' visits were recorded, it is hard to comment whether their visits were supported by quality checks by engineers.

Interestingly, the state had in place earlier a system wherein the HMs were chiefly responsible for civil works in schools. In such a framework, the DEOs had greater authority to monitor civil works and ensure their completion and quality. This is because the HM/ Principal would be an education department employee, directly under the DEO's authority. However, it was felt that this responsibility took away the bulk of the HM's teaching or school management time. All civil works monitoring were therefore taken out of their hands. The new system, instead, tried to decentralize civil works to panchayats, with SMCs playing an overall supervisory role. In theory, this seems to have been a good move. As suggested earlier, most major civil works under SSA are now complete, and it is perhaps better to decentralize minor construction/repairs to local panchayats, with SMCs interacting with panchayats, expressing their needs for schools, and then monitoring these works. But in a context where the SMCs themselves have poor capacity, this loop, although it holds promise, gets weakened.

In the case of RMSA, all civil works are allotted to the PWD. The PWD sends monthly physical reports to the RMSA district officials who can make complaints to state officials, if any. Payments to the PWD in this case are made directly by the State. Once again, there is a division of financial and monitoring powers (that rest with the DEO), which weakens the accountability chain.

Moreover, there are strong norms for electrification, water etc. that a RMSA school building must meet before it can be "handed-over". However, RMSA does not provide for an engineer or technical staff at the DEO's office and many DEOs report that they lack the expertise to make any meaningful assessments of construction quality. Agencies often fail to fulfill all these conditions, delaying the entire handing-over process. The survey also came across cases where incomplete buildings were being used to run secondary schools, with no official "handing over" having been done - incomplete doors and windows, broken boundary walls raised important concerns of safety; fans and other fittings were stolen by local miscreants. Built at an average cost of over Rs. 3 crore, RMSA schools are unable to even hire a peon or guard to ensure the building's safety.

3.6.3 School Grants: Coverage, Timing and Usability

School grants are an important component of both the SSA and the RMSA. In 2014-15, school grants accounted for 4% of the total SSA allocation in Chhattisgarh. Although small, school grants are the only funds over which the school-level management committees can exercise any degree of expenditure discretion. Consequently, school grants have a significant bearing on the day-to-day functioning of the school - whether school infrastructure is maintained properly, administrative expenses are catered for and teaching materials (apart from textbooks) are available. In the context of RTE, these grants take on an even greater relevance. The RTE mandates that all SMCs make school development plans. The intent behind these plans is to create a bottom-up, school based funding structure where individual school needs are prioritized.

Under SSA, three types of annual grants have been provided for all elementary schools in the country. These are a: i) School Maintenance Grant (SMG); (ii) School Development Grant or School Grant (SDG); and (iii) Teaching Learning Material Grant (TLM) (these go directly to teachers). TLM is largely being phased out now and the survey focused on only 2 of these 3 grants: the SDG and the SMG. The grants arrive at schools with very clear expenditure guidelines. The SMG is for infrastructure upkeep and the SDG is meant for school operation and administration. The RMSA also provides for three types of annual school grants. These are: (1) Laboratory Grant; (2) Books/ Library Grants; and (3) Contingency Grant (for more details, see Box 3-1).

Box 3-1. SSA and RMSA Grant Norms

SSA Grants

Maintenance grants: Schools up to three classrooms will be eligible for maintenance grant upto a maximum of Rs.5000 per school per year while schools having more than three classrooms would get a maintenance grant up to a maximum of Rs.10000 per school per year, subject to the condition that the overall eligibility for the district would be Rs.7500 per school (Note: Headmaster room and Office room would not count as a classroom for this purpose).

School grants: Rs.5000/- per year for primary school and Rs.7000/- per year for upper primary schools for replacement of non-functional school equipment and for other recurring costs such as consumables etc. The amount for upper primary School will include items for science laboratories and computer education requirements.

RMSA Grants

Repair/Replacement of Laboratory Equipments and Purchase of Lab consumable articles

- Science lab for classes IX-X
- Replacement and/ or repairing of laboratory equipments
- Purchase of consumables/chemicals etc.
- Upkeep of laboratories
- Any other activity relating to Science and Mathematics.
- Annual grant of Rs. 25,000/- per school per annum or as per actual requirements.

Purchase of Books, periodicals, newspapers etc.

- Purchase of books with due reference to the lists of books recommended by the KVS (or) ‰ List recommended by the State Governments (or)
- Rs. 10,000 per annum or the actual expenditure, whichever is less.
- Text Books and Reference Books for teachers should also be included.
- (or) as per the scheme formulated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation, the nodal agency of Govt. of India to support public library services and systems.

School annual grants – recurring

- Sports, music, dance, painting, culture, teaching aids
    - Equipments for teaching geography as elective
    - Drawing equipments & painting materials
    - Maps, charts, specified instruments & appliances
    - Sports equipments, uniforms etc.
- To meet petty and contingent expenditure like meetings, conveyance, stationeries
- Petty repairs & maintenance
- Water, electricity, telephone, internet charges/ other rates and taxes; other expenditure.
- State Government/community/PRIs/ private sector may also contribute.
- Grant of Rs. 15,000/- per annum or actual expenditure, whichever is less to meet water and electricity charges.

Source: Framework for implementation of RMSA, Ministry of Human Resource Development

In the context of grants, the survey focused on the following key questions: (1) Did all schools receive the grants in the last two financial years i.e. FY2013-14 and FY 2014-15? (2) Did these grants arrive on time? (3) Are schools able to utilize these grants?

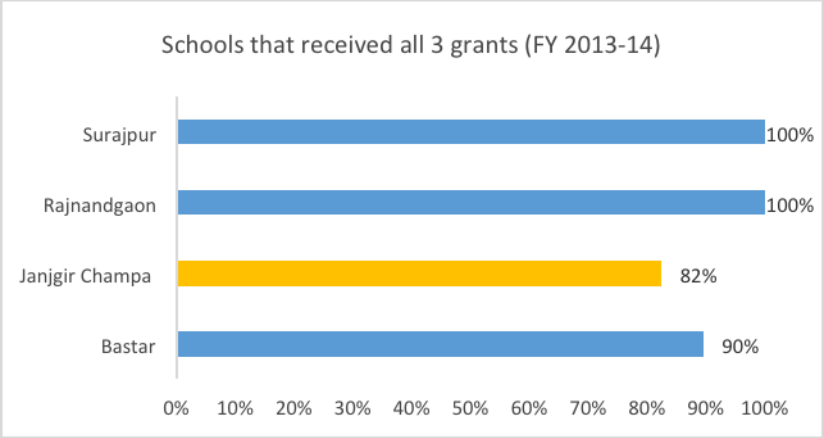
Table 3-19 and Figure 3-15 below show the coverage of the school grants under the SSA and the RMSA. School grants coverage under the SSA was over 80% in both the financial years i.e. 82% of all surveyed SSA schools in FY 2014-15 had received their SDG and SMG. However, all schools must receive their annual grants and 15-20% of all schools remained un-served in the State.

Table 3-19: Nearly four in every five of SSA schools reported receiving both SDG and SMG in FY 2014-15; drop in Janjgir Champa over FY 2013-14

Percentage schools that received both SDG and SMG	2014-15	2013-14
Bastar	84%	77%
Janjgir Champa	76%	85%
Rajnandgaon	86%	92%
Surajpur	82%	85%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Figure 3-15: All schools surveyed in Rajnandgaon and Surajpur received the 3 RMSA grants



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

In terms of the timing of grant receipt, FY 2014-15 saw greater delays for all four districts, when compared with FY 2013-14. Nearly 100% of both school grants (SDG and SMG) had been received by SSA schools in all four districts by the second quarter (July) in FY 2013-14. In FY 2014-15, however, about 50% of all schools had received their grants in the second quarter (June) and the remaining only by the third quarter (November). Delays in receipt of money can severely limit both the ability of the school to spend any money at all and also the heads under which such money can be spent. As money arrives in the school bank account late, it is often spent on heads such as irrelevant whitewashing of walls. Delays and inconsistencies in the timing also impede the ability of the school management committees to make any meaningful plans about the use of this money as they can never know how much to expect and by when. Among schools that received their school grants, the withdrawal of funds under these was high (Table 3-20).

Table 3-20: 94% of SDG and 92% of the SMG received in FY 2014-15 was withdrawn by SSA schools

Percentage of amount withdrawn, of grant received		
	SDG	SMG
Bastar	94%	88%
Janjgir Champa	96%	94%
Rajnandgaon	98%	98%
Surajpur	88%	87%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Under RMSA, however, none of the schools surveyed had received their schools grants in FY 2014-15. Officers at the State level confirmed that no disbursements were made under this head in the year because RMSA funds were severely delayed and by the time they arrived with the SIS (State Implementation Society), they were assigned to recurring costs e.g. teacher salaries. This is indeed confirmed by a look at budget numbers for the State. In 2014-15, GoCG released less than 10% of its funds in the first 2 quarters of the financial year. More than half of its funds were released only in the 4th quarter. GoI, however, had released 80% of its contribution by the second quarter of the financial year (see figure 3-4 cited earlier).

In this scenario of delays and with pressing demands for teacher salaries that had remained pending, the State office released all funds towards teacher salaries and no money was released under school grants in FY 2014-15. Schools receiving RMSA grants in FY 2013-14 also faced bigger delays in grant receipt than those that received the SSA grants. While all SSA schools had received grants by July, RMSA grants only reached schools by September-October, 2013.

None of the money under RMSA grants had been withdrawn at the time of the survey. Underspending of school grants under RMSA has been a significant problem. In fact, the decision of the State to not disburse any funds under schools grants in FY 2014-15 can also be viewed in this context. Schools that receive RMSA grants have consistently failed to spend any or most of these funds over the years, adding to large pools of unspent balances.

Findings from the qualitative study can be used to understand this underspending of RMSA grants better. An important constraint is that grant money received is not always in line what the school actually needs. For instance, while in FY 2013-14 nearly all schools surveyed had received their laboratory grants, the absence of science teachers or laboratory assistants means that school labs remain largely non-functioning. It is very hard in such cases to spend these funds. Gaps in civil works completion mean that many schools that are “built” under RMSA are yet to receive proper buildings, labs, libraries, classrooms and toilets leaving little room to spend funds related to these. Even when school labs exist and teachers are available, the labs are too small to buy equipment worth Rs 25,000 every year, as defined under the RMSA norms.

Weak planning systems at the school level further limit the ability of the school to spend school grant money. Rules require that all expenditure under this head must be made by the Principal in consultation with members of the SMDC. However, these seem to exist only on paper.

Attempting to bring together diverse voices to manage such large pools of money is often a big challenge. School principals and district officers report that politically active members of a SMDC often make it difficult to reach a consensus. The dynamics between the school staff and parents then becomes complex and leads to controversies and arguments. Most parents are uneducated, unaware or just plain

uninterested. While similar issues exist in an SMC of an SSA school too, the sums of money are often too small to create big problems. RMSA grants on the other hands are substantial pools of funds and cause greater friction.

"SMDC rights' should be constrained. Everyone talks about the rights given to the SMDCs but no one tells them about their responsibilities."

- A district officer

Getting an SMDC to function in a valid manner is also challenging. Technically, an SMDC should consist of 23-24 members, some of which have to be MP/MLA representatives. It is hard to bring together such a large group of people together on a regular basis – even when meetings are held, a quorum is not reached and no decisions can be taken. Districts have made this point to the State and an order reducing the number of SMDC members needed to reach the quorum was to be made at the time of writing this report.

More stringent rules for financial management under RMSA also make it harder to spend funds at the school level. For instance, while all large payments must be made via a cheque, school principals reported that local vendors often expect cash.

3.6.4 Challenges of governance

In addition to what has been discussed above, there are some key governance challenges that emerge at the district and block levels, limiting the ability of the state to implement SSA and RMSA effectively.

Weak District-level planning: The District should perhaps be the strongest link in the chain of bottom up planning. In theory, it is close to both the schools in a village, through a well-administered block office, as well as to the overarching State-level office where all important decisions are taken. In the bottom-up planning process, it must be viewed as the most important unit which has both the access as well the resources to make an effective plan that would reflect the realities of the ground and allow for a system that would allocate limited funds to the most pressing-needs. However, findings from our qualitative interviews suggest that districts are consistently and systematically failing at this task.

A District education officer (DEO) summed it up:

"Planning is not leading to anything. If it had, then a lot would have been achieved by now."

All DEOs interviewed were of the opinion that the nature of day-to-day work at the district level did not lend itself to a very productive work environment.

They said they had "no idea" of what their next working day would look like - sudden meetings and orders regularly came up leading them to move from one unscheduled task to another. A district's work priorities were seen to change with new Collectors and CEOs - projects/schemes were left mid-way and new ones were adopted with much vigour. In a context where existing plans were not seen to their logical end and their implementers were not evaluated on pre-determined targets, it wasn't a surprise that plans routinely failed.

"Work plans function on the side. After that we receive orders which are very different from the plans noted in the AWP&B. Then we start fulfilling those."

"I want to work on a specific target/scheme for a substantial amount of time without such interruptions so that positive benefits/output of the scheme are evident. "

- *District-level officers*

While plans are put together using all mandatory processes, the nature of putting these together and the data used are such that these are often of no real value. While it is compulsory to use DISE/ UDISE data to make such plans, most officers at the district level show little faith in the quality of this data. When planning is based on poor data, the plan itself suffers. Following recent government orders, district officials have been cross-verifying DISE data in all districts and making corrections. A complex software has been put in place to manage much of this data. However, when we met MIS officers and computer operators in district offices, many spoke of not receiving enough training to work on the software.

Limited manpower and poor training: An important issue that emerged in discussions with district and block officers was that of vacancies amongst the administrative staff. These vacancies are particularly large for: (a) tribal areas, (b) at the block level, and (c) for trained staff.

Many of the computer operators' posts at the block level lie vacant. As systems become more computerised, this severely affects the day to day functioning of the SSA and RMSA. As much of the data is maintained in soft copies and most reporting is to be done online, vacancies at these positions create large delays. Block officials that have been in their jobs for a while now are usually not accustomed to working with computers. Many of them have been promoted to their current positions purely by virtue of being around for a long time – some started out as peons and have received no in service training even as their roles have greatly expanded with time. This coupled with poor internet access in block offices leads to significant delays, breaking an important link in the bottom-up planning chain. These problems are more acutely felt in tribal areas as not only is the available pool of trained staff smaller, but existing staff also does not want to be posted in these areas.

Large vacancies mean that the current staff is grossly overworked. Staff vacancies are also acutely seen in RMSA administration where many people are reluctant to get posted. This is largely due to the significant delays in salaries discussed above.

Many officers in a DEO's office – such as those that look after planning, finance, accounts and overall data management – reported that they had received little or no training when it came to the challenges of their day to day work. A finance officer in a district office cited an instance where while guidelines mandated that they use "double entry" of data for a format, no one in their office had been trained to do this. Most officers therefore continued to work in their old ways which were tedious and more time consuming. Officers often felt a strong sense of helplessness in this regard, being unable to do their jobs well.

"We are just here to follow orders. Other than that, there is not much we can do."

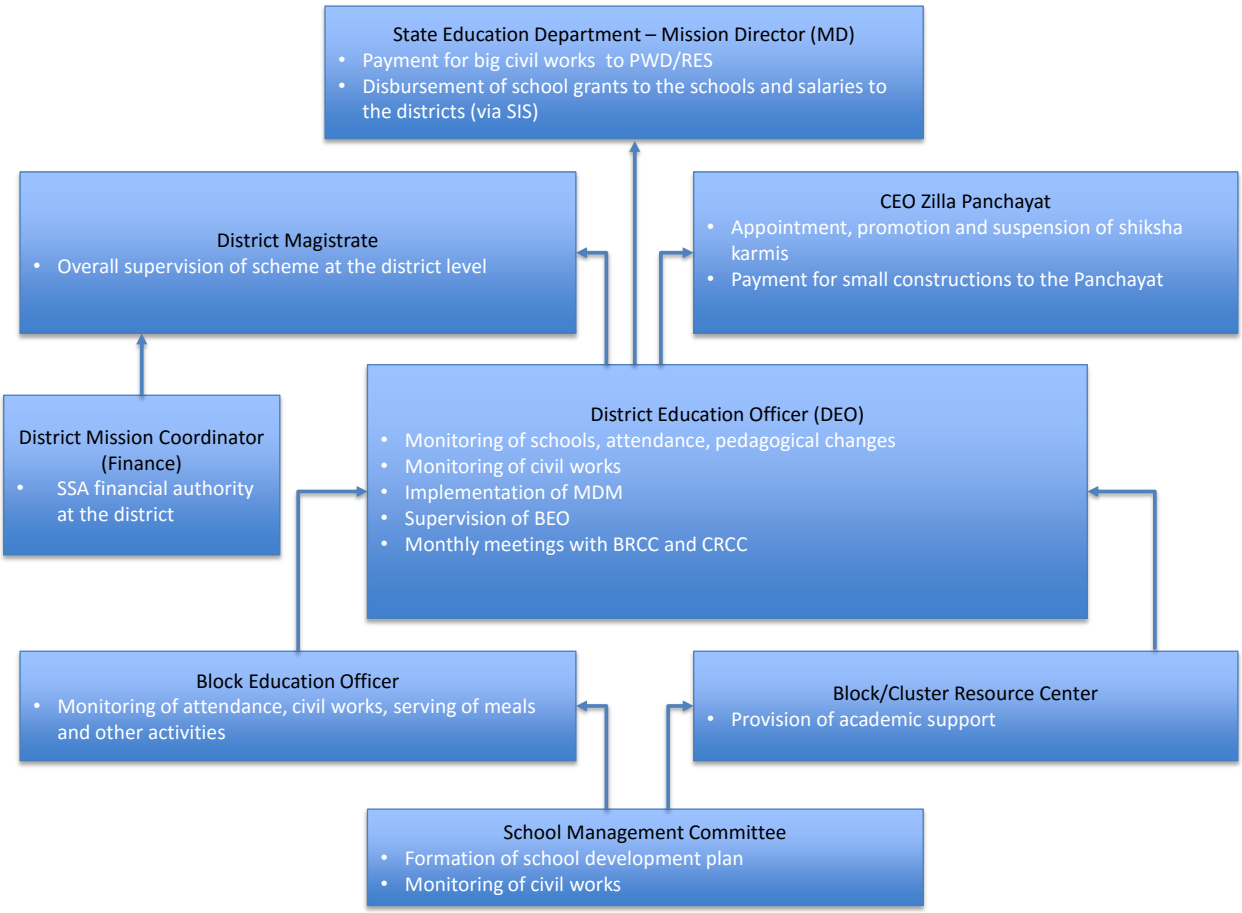
- A district-level finance officer

DEOs themselves seem to receive better training though these are largely ad-hoc and without any direct link to their regular work. In a setup where "good performance" is often based on their "relationship with

the superiors" and not necessarily any objective measures of performance, the incentive to take such trainings seriously is also limited.

Muddled administrative hierarchy: At the State level, both the SSA and RMSA are headed by a Mission Director (MD). The DEO is responsible for the overall functioning of the schemes at the district level– supported by planning officers, accountants and MIS officers. For the SSA, each district also has a DMC (District Mission Coordinator), an officer in charge of all financial matters of the SSA who reports directly to the DM (see figure 3-16). This DMC post, however, has gone through many reshuffles and is, currently, at the center of a rather messy administrative structure, which obfuscates accountability mechanisms.

Figure 3-16: Administrative Structure for SSA



Prior to 2013, each Chhattisgarh district had a DPC (District Project Coordinator) – an officer responsible for implementation of SSA at the district level. However, in 2013-14, the post of the DPC was subsumed under the DEO's post[42]. The PAB minutes for 2013-14 noted that the parallel post of a DPC did not make sense if a DEO was already in place. The PAB further went on to state that the SSA was never designed as a parallel structure, and therefore it is only logical that DEOs look after the functions assigned to the DPC. Provisioning was however made for an assistant coordinator who would report to the DEO and facilitate him/her in SSA functions[43]. All matters related to SSA finance were then routed via the DEO, to the DM for

[42] The merging of these posts was also undertaken in other states.

43 For more details, see PAB minutes available at http://ssa.nic.in/pabminutes documents/Pab%20Minutes%202013-14/Chhattisgarh/Chhattisgarh_PAB_minutes_13_14.pdf.

approval. A significant number of prior DPCs and their staff were affected by this churning and approached the State in the matter. To absorb this fleet of officials, a new post - APC Finance (Assistant Project Coordinator) - was created in 2013. All SSA financial authority at the district level was once again transferred out of the DEO's office to the APC Finance and the relevant files were sent directly by the APC Finance to the DM for approval. In July 2015, the APC Finance was renamed DMC (District Mission Coordinator) – an officer who reports on all SSA finance matters directly to the DM. While the DM is the de facto supervisor of the DMC, the DEO remains not only the supervisor de jure but also the district authority monitoring the effective implementation of SSA. In this structure, however, the DEO is bereft of any significant powers as related to financial matters of the SSA (which rest with the DMC), creating problems including those of teacher and civil works monitoring, discussed above.

At the block level, the BEO is the overall officer in charge of all education activities, and the BRCC (Block Resource Center Coordinator) and the CRCC (Cluster Resource Center Coordinator) at the sub district level work (and report) in parallel towards strengthening academic support to schools.

The DEO himself reports to two bosses – (1) the education department at the State level and (2) the CEO Zilla Parishad and the DM at the district level. DEOs are routinely pulled into meetings of public grievance redressal and monitoring visits organized by the district administration often at the cost of their other work. This adds to an already high-pressure work day dominated by public dealings and other meetings. In such a work environment, there is very little room for a DEO to act like a manager who must keep in mind the larger picture of teacher availability and proper implementation of civil works.

All of these officials come together to form a complex administrative structure in which lines of accountability are not as clear. Officials who are supposed to discipline and regulate, do not have the authority to do so. This is further complicated by the fact that people at senior levels are often paid lower salaries than those at lower levels (owing to the nature of their contract)[44] and people in the same office receive salaries with varying regularity (RMSA staff salaries are almost always delayed and those that work on RMSA but are hired directly by the education department receive salaries on time). All of these issues come together to bring down worker morale and create friction – the administration does not work as one unit but as a medley of people firefighting through their workday to make sure they make it to the other side with the least amount of friction or mistakes.

3.7 Conclusion

A survey of SSA and secondary schools in the four districts under study suggests a few areas of concern. First, and despite several years of the RTE being in place, gaps remain in provision of key infrastructure facilities in both primary and secondary schools. Lack of usable toilets and boundary walls emerge as important concerns. Crucially, the schools do not seem to have control over putting their demands for provision of these facilities upwards to the administrative hierarchy. While there is provision for making school development plans, most schools are not trained on how to prepare these plans, and feel that it is an exercise in futility as the funds that are released for civil works are not necessarily in line with school needs. At the same time, planning at the district level is also done in an ad hoc manner with little or no emphasis placed on plans that are received from schools. The challenge of infrastructure provision is further enhanced by the fact that fund allocation for civil works in the state has been reduced of late on

[44] A regular education department peon may be paid a lot more than a BRCC in an SSA office – causing frustration and poor incentives.

account of problems in implementation, which appear genuine with most construction being carried out by external agencies, without school or SMC involvement.

Second, the human resource crunch is worrying. Teacher vacancies compounded by teacher absenteeism, impact teacher 'availability'. Multi-grade teaching, particularly in secondary schools, has an adverse effect on education quality, more so for subjects like Science and Math since other teachers have to double up to teach these as well. While the model of shiksha karmis/panchayat shikshaks has been followed in other states as well, this cadre of teachers tends to be highly unionized and open to political pressure. The incentive to work too is low, as salaries tend to be lower than those paid to regular teachers and also arrive with a lag. In sum, and while the idea of a decentralized teaching cadre is something to be advocated for, in practice its implementation faces a variety of problems. Some of these are quite fundamental to the nature of public recruitments and the dynamic of power, politics and administration and at the policy level there is little that can be done about them in the near term. However, problems such as delays in salaries on account of delays in release of funds to the SIS, or overlapping accountability structures, are procedural inefficiencies that can be smoothened.

Third, while the GoCG has limited powers to affect the delays in releases from GOI, delays in releases of its own share are also observed which affect timely payments of expenses like salaries. Till FY 2013-14, funds for SSA were released directly by GOI and state governments to autonomous implementing bodies known as State Implementation Societies (SIS). In FY 2014-15, a new fund flow mechanism was introduced. Under this system, GOI allocations are first released to the state treasury. Money is then routed to SIS. This could partially explain the delay in GoI funds reaching the SIS. However, delays in the state releasing its own share, onward to the districts need to be monitored closely. For example, under RMSA, GoCG itself delayed its releases in FY 2014-15, severely affecting payments on the ground.

Finally, accountability structures seem to overlap and impact monitoring. DEO and BEO offices are responsible for monitoring teachers, but have no control over shiksha karmis/panchayat shikshaks who are appointed by the CEO Zilla panchayat and form the largest proportion of the teaching cadre in Chhattisgarh. Financial authority too is conflated, with the DMC reporting on financial issues regarding the SSA, directly to the DM, while the DEO remains responsible for education issues in the district. BRCCs and CRCCs are not found to be monitoring schools despite being specifically charged with the responsibility of academic improvements. At the school level, headmasters and SMCs exercise little control over civil works implementation despite being most affected by it.

All of these challenges are not unique to Chhattisgarh. In fact, they dominate the landscape of administrative complexity that riddles education, and for that matter, any sector. However, each of these knots can be untied with small reforms. We reflect on what some of these reforms might be in our final concluding chapter.

4 Mid-day Meal Scheme

Summary Findings

- Chhattisgarh has clearly innovated in delivering the MDM within the State. Its efforts to introduce an online system of rice provisioning to reduce the time taken to deliver rice to schools, and decrease pilferage; involving local women in cooking meals; paying them a higher honorarium to increase their incentive to work; and ensuring that the meals served are of good quality are notable.
- On average, MDM is served over 19-20 days in a month, with no discernible district-level variations. However, there appears to be an inflation of the meal 'requirement', which has implications for grain and cooking cost allocation.
- A high proportion of all schools (84-97%) surveyed across the four sample districts have a kitchen on their premises for MDM cooking, and of these a majority were found in an open and usable condition. However, the gap between the predominantly tribal and non-tribal districts is significant. About one in four schools in Bastar, and three in ten schools in Surajpur did not have a kitchen or where present, it was either closed or not found to be in a usable condition at the time of the survey.
- The availability of cooking equipment is a major problem in Janjgir Champa with nearly a third of all cooks (SHG members) reporting that they didn't have access to adequate equipment for cooking the MDM.
- Grains were mostly found to well-stored and covered, except in Rajnandgaon where 25% of all schools surveyed had stored their grains without any cover or measures of hygiene.
- While grain availability is not found to be a significant issue except in the summer months, grain quality is reportedly inconsistent across months.
- Wide variation is found in the availability of mandatory display boards to display the daily menu and the daily utilization of food grains. Over 50% schools in Bastar and 30% in Surajpur did not have such a display board. When the boards were available, only few displayed the amount of grains available and consumed, with Janjgir Champa being a particularly significant offender.
- In about half the schools visited in Bastar, there is no facility for children to wash their hands before eating the mid-day meal. Even in the other districts, these numbers are substantial. Only about half of schools with hand-wash facilities in Bastar and Janjgir Champa had any soap for washing hands.
- Substantial delays are observed in the honorarium payments of the cook-cum-helpers (CCH). Nearly half of all CCH surveyed reported that they did not receive their honorarium on time. The issue is most significant in Surajpur with nearly 30% of the CCH facing a delay of over 4 months in receiving their honorariums.
- The monitoring of the MDM is closely linked with the overall monitoring of schools. Poor monitoring of primary schools in general and the absence of well-functioning SMCs mean that MDM monitoring continues to be limited.
- Awareness of MDM helpline among school head masters and SHG members is low across districts. Among SHGs engaged with MDM provisioning in schools, 82% in Surajpur and 79% in Janjgir Champa had never head of the MDM helpline.

4.1 Introduction

Introduced in 1995 to protect the nutritional and educational rights of children, the mid-day meal scheme is a nationwide program that serves meals to all school children of government primary and upper primary schools, including government aided schools in India. It aims to protect children from hunger and malnutrition, while simultaneously improving school enrollment and attendance, socialization amongst children of all castes, and empowering women by providing employment to them as cooks.

Under the scheme, each school going child between the ages of 6-14 years is entitled to a hot cooked meal during school hours, with children in primary schools being served 100 gm of rice per child per school day and children in upper primary schools being served 150 gm of rice per child per school day. This food allocation is funded entirely by the Central government, which also bears the cost of transporting the grains, and managing and monitoring the scheme. In addition to the food grains, schools receive two financial grants. First, they receive money for funding cooking costs which include costs incurred towards buying ingredients such as pulses, vegetables, cooking oil, condiments and fuel. According to current norms, this amounts to Rs. 3.86 per child per day for primary schools and Rs. 5.70 per child per day for upper primary schools. In addition, schools receive funds to finance honorariums of cooks-cum-helpers (CCH) - Rs. 1,000 per month - for 10 months in a year. States are mandated to contribute 25 percent toward these two expenses, with the Government of India funding the rest.

The programme has been studied extensively for its effects on education and nutrition. Studies show that it has a significant impact on enrolment, especially of children belonging to disadvantaged groups (Afridi, 2011[45]; Jayaraman and Simroth; 2011[46]). It is also known to help retention and regular attendance. Positive nutrition effects viz. improvement in protein and iron intake have been observed (Afridi, 2010)[47], and learning outcomes are known to have improved (Afridi, Barooah and Somanathan, 2013)[48].

In Chhattisgarh (erstwhile Madhya Pradesh), at first the programme was launched only in tribal blocks. However, after a Supreme Court ruling in 2001 which directed all states to provide hot cooked meals to all primary school children, Chhattisgarh started serving hot cooked meals in all its primary schools, beginning April 2002[49]. Since then, there have been a number of changes to the scheme including for instance an increase in the cooking cost norms and in CCH honorariums.

Chhattisgarh is acknowledged as a state that has brought about a number of innovations in the scheme (see for instance Puri (2012), and Krishnamurthy, Pathania and Tandon (2014)). With effect from January 1, 2014, women Self Help Groups (SHGs) have been made responsible for serving MDM in all government and

[45] Afridi, F. 2011. "The Impact of School Meals on School Participation in Rural India", *Journal of Development Studies*, (Special Section on Impact Evaluation), Vol 47, No 11, pp 1636-56, November.
[46] Jayaraman, R.and D. Simroth. 2011. "The Impact of School Lunches on Primary School Enrollment: Evidence from India's Midday Meal Scheme", ESMT, 11-11.
47 Afridi, F. 2010. "Child Welfare Programs and Child Nutrition: Evidence from a Mandated School Meal Program", *Journal of Development Economic*s, Vol 92, No 2, pp 152-65, July.
[48] Afridi, F., B. Barooah and R. Somanathan. 2013. "School meals and classroom effort: Evidence from India", IGC Working Paper, March.
[49] MDM was scaled up to all government and government aided upper primary schools in October 2007.

government aided primary and upper primary schools[50]. They are responsible for picking up grains from the local public distribution system (PDS) shop, buying (locally) all cooking ingredients such as fuel, condiments, oil etc. and carrying out the actual cooking of the meals in the schools. In most cases, members of the SHG are the designated cook-cum-helpers (CCH). The SHGs in turn receive payments for their work based on cooking cost norms (calculated on the basis of how many children were served MDM), and honorariums for the CCH which flow directly into the bank accounts of individual members who serve as cooks.

The State has also been credited for its wide ranging reforms in PDS. Policy initiatives such as procuring food grains directly from farmers to encourage them to raise production[51]; transferring management of fair price shops to local bodies (SHGs, gram panchayats and cooperatives)[52]; providing below poverty line rations to more households[53]; reducing the PDS ration price[54]; increasing commission paid to shop owners; mandating delivery of grains to FPSs by the 7th of every month in government trucks painted in a distinct color; mandating use of electronic weighing scales in all ration shops; and conducting regular verification drives to weed out ghost beneficiaries – have helped the State extend coverage of the PDS, improve delivery and increase transparency. A number of reviews of the scheme, such as that of Puri's (2012)[55] find that a majority of beneficiaries are satisfied with the way ration shops function. Other studies indicate an increase in per capita rice consumption (Krishnamurthy, Pathania and Tandon, 2014)[56], leading many to laud the Chhattisgarh PDS delivery system as a model for delivery of the National Food Security Act.

Chhattisgarh has also taken steps to streamline grain delivery for MDM through an online monitoring system, where on the basis of enrollment, attendance and consumption in the previous month, food grains are allotted to each school and an online order is issued to the Food and Civil Supplies Department for supply of food grains to local PDS shops for further issuing to schools. Coupons for grain allotment for each school are generated online, which can then be used by the schools to collect the food grains from the PDS shops (more details in section 4.4).

At the national level, the scheme has been beset with challenges such as reports of corruption through pilfering of grains, poor kitchen facilities, poor quality of the food that is served, lack of hygiene, resulting in

[50] Prior to this order, multiple agencies managed the delivery of MDM including SHGs, gram panchayats, in some cases SMCs, and in a few cases NGOs and headmasters themselves.

[51] In 2002, Chhattisgarh introduced a Decentralized Procurement Scheme which allowed the state government to procure rice directly from farmers.

[52] In 2004, a Public Distribution System (Control) Order 2004 de-privatised FPSs and instituted a number of transparency/auditing mechanisms for foodgrain distribution.

[53] In 2007, Chhattisgarh launched the Mukhyamantri Khadyann Sahayata Yojana which increased the number of people entitled to the most preferential PDS Scheme subsidies. An additional 1.9 million households (who had been excluded from the 2002 BPL survey because of the Planning Commission cap on poverty numbers) were added to the 1.33 million households already receiving subsidized food grains from the Central government at that time. This state-led initiative helped Chhattisgarh PDS increase coverage to approximately 80 percent of the rural population.

[54] In 2007, Chhattisgarh started offering foodgrains at its PDS stores below the Central Issue Price. Its ability to do so and for a wider base was helped by the increase in rice procurement, as well as reduction in pilferage.

[55] Puri, R. 2012. "Reforming the Public Distribution System: Lessons from Chhattisgarh", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVII., No. 5, February 4: 21-23.

[56] Krishnamurthy, P., V. Pathania and S. Tandon. 2014. "Public Distribution System Reforms and Consumption in Chhattisgarh: A Comparative Empirical Analysis", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIX., No. 8, February 22: 74-81.

worst cases in food poisoning. This survey interviewed the school headmasters, members of SHGs who served as cooks in the school and PDS shop owners to bring forth a complete picture of MDM delivery in schools in Chhattisgarh. Barring issues of significant delays in fund flows for cooking costs and CCH honorariums, the overall perception about the scheme in the State among all stakeholders interviewed was positive. In particular, the quality of the meals served was found to be good, and the online system put in place to estimate the requirement of and distribution of grains was found to be effective across nearly the entire sample and must be viewed as a significant achievement by the State.

To enable cohesion in data collection and its analysis, we confined our analysis of MDM service delivery for classes 1-5 only. Based on this field-level data, the following observations can be made.

4.2 Coverage

In FY 2014-15, on average, MDM was served over 19-20 days in a month in the schools in our sample, with no discernible district level variations. Predictably, the summer months (May and June) saw significantly lower coverage[57]. The average number of days when the MDM was served also fell in October –another month with school holidays[58] (see table 4-1). These trends are almost the same for FY 2013-14, except for an additional dip in the month of November. We tried ascertaining the reasons for this with officials, but no clear explanation emerged.

Table 4-1: Number of days in a month when the MDM was served in FY 2014-15 was similar across all districts; this fell in May-June and in October

Number of days in the month when MDM was served (2014-15)				
	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Apr-14	22	21	21	22
May-14	0	0	0	0
Jun-14	12	11	13	6
Jul-14	26	24	24	25
Aug-14	24	22	23	24
Sep-14	26	25	25	26
Oct-14	17	17	17	17
Nov-14	22	22	22	22
Dec-14	21	21	21	21
Jan-15	26	25	26	24
Feb-15	23	23	22	22
Mar-15	22	23	23	23

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

The MDM Annual Work Plan &Budget (AWP&B) submitted by the State government in FY 2015-16 reports very high coverage of the scheme against both enrollment and PAB approvals for FY 2014-15. These seem to be in line with our coverage numbers.

[57] The State school calendar has summer holidays between May 1st and June 15th.
[58] In October 2014, for instance, the school calendar reported five holidays in addition to the weekends.

Table 4-2: Coverage against enrolment highest in Rajnandgaon; coverage against budget approval highest in Surajpur

2014-15	Coverage against enrolment	Coverage against approval
Bastar	82%	91%
Janjgir Champa	82%	91%
Rajnandgaon	92%	94%
Surajpur	83%	98%
State	**85%**	**93%**

Source: AWP&B tables, FY 2015-16

However, our survey data also presents a peculiar problem. It suggests that once attendance is factored in, the average number of meals being served in a school is higher than what may be required to feed the students attending school on a given day. Let us clarify on what the number of meals served indicates. It is simply a product of the number of days MDM is served in a school every month, and the average number of students present each day on a given day in that month[59]. Table 4-3 presents our own estimations of two indicators. The first, presented in column E of the table, records the average number of meals served, per month, across the schools in our sample in FY 2014-15. This has been obtained from the school headmaster's records maintained in an MDM register. The second is an estimate of what the number of meals *should have been* based on student attendance (presented in column D). This is simply a product of the average number of students attending school every month in our sample schools and the average number of days MDM was served each month in these schools, for the 10 month period.

The attendance numbers used are the attendance measured on the day of the survey, averaged across schools surveyed in the district. It may be argued that this may present an unrealistic picture as it may be an underestimate of the number of students who actually attend school through the year. However, for one, the survey was done in July-August, immediately after the summer break, when attendance is known to be high. Further, and as the previous chapter on SSA reports, attendance was measured in two districts at three points in 2015, and no discernable variations in numbers of children showing up in school were found across months[60]. A comparison of the two indicators suggests that schools in Bastar, Janjgir Champa and Surajpur may be over-reporting MDM coverage by 14-17%.

[59] Due to low or negligible frequency of MDM in the summer months of May and June, these months were excluded from the calculation.

[60] These are in line with student attendance numbers noted by reports like ASER which suggests attendance in the range of 70-79% across all schools in rural Chhattisgarh in the years in which the ASER survey was fielded (2007, 2009, 2011 and 2014).

Table 4-3: Coverage based on attendance

	Average no. of Days MDM is served (A)	Attendance in % (B)	Average enrollment per school (C)	Meals that should be served in a school in a month (D = A x B x C)	Average meals served per school per month, as per HM records (E)	Potential Over-reporting ((E-D)/D)
Bastar	23	75%	49	845	986	17%
Janjgir Champa	22	75%	79	1304	1500	15%
Rajnandgaon	22	85%	63	1178	1203	2%
Surajpur	23	69%	46	730	835	14%

Source: PAISA Chhattisgarh Survey 2015; authors' own calculations

To verify our numbers, we did an additional calculation. We calculated the average number of meals that should have been served per month on the basis of children enrolled. Table 4-4 presents this third indicator. Clearly, what the MDM registers report are figures which lie somewhere in between the number of meals that should be served based on enrollment (column 3), and number of meals that should be served based on attendance (column 5). In fact, a simple average of the numbers in columns 3 and 5, leads us approximately to the numbers reported in the register (column 4).

Table 4-4: Coverage based on enrolment

	Average no. of Days MDM is served (1)	Average enrollment per school (2)	Meals that should be served in a school in a month based on enrolment (3 = 1 x2)	Average meals served per school per month, as per HM records (4)	Meals that should be served in a school in a month based on attendance (5); (Column D, Table 4-3)
Bastar	23	49	1127	986	845
Janjgir Champa	22	79	1738	1500	1304
Rajnandgaon	22	63	1386	1203	1178
Surajpur	23	46	1058	835	730

Source: PAISA Chhattisgarh Survey 2015; authors' own calculations

It must be recognized that these data and calculations are but averages that are based on certain assumptions. These findings therefore must be seen as only indicative. Having said that, and as we will elaborate later in this chapter, the system of SHG payments and grain allocation is based entirely on the number of meals served in a month, which are recorded in the MDM register by the headmaster. These registers, which are not available to the public or cross-verified by members of the community, are used to populate the online system for grain requisition and calculate cooking cost payments. A slight over reporting on the number of meals served can thus result in additional grain allocation and/or money for the SHG members. While there are provisions for checks and balances in the form of SMCs and regular school monitoring by officials, as we shall see later, these are not being implemented effectively.

4.3 Infrastructure for MDM provision in schools

This section evaluates whether schools in our sample districts had adequate infrastructure in place to serve mid-day meals. These include the availability of a *usable* kitchen; cooking equipment; availability of proper storage facility for storing grains; a board that displays the daily menu, grain availability and consumption; and finally water and soap for the children, cooks and servers to wash their hands.

4.3.1 Availability of 'usable' kitchens

A high proportion of all schools (84-97%) surveyed had a kitchen on their premises for MDM cooking, and of these a majority were found in an open and usable condition by our survey team. However, the gap between the predominantly tribal and non-tribal districts was significant. About one in four schools in Bastar, and three in ten schools in Surajpur did not have a kitchen or where present, it was either closed or not in a usable condition.

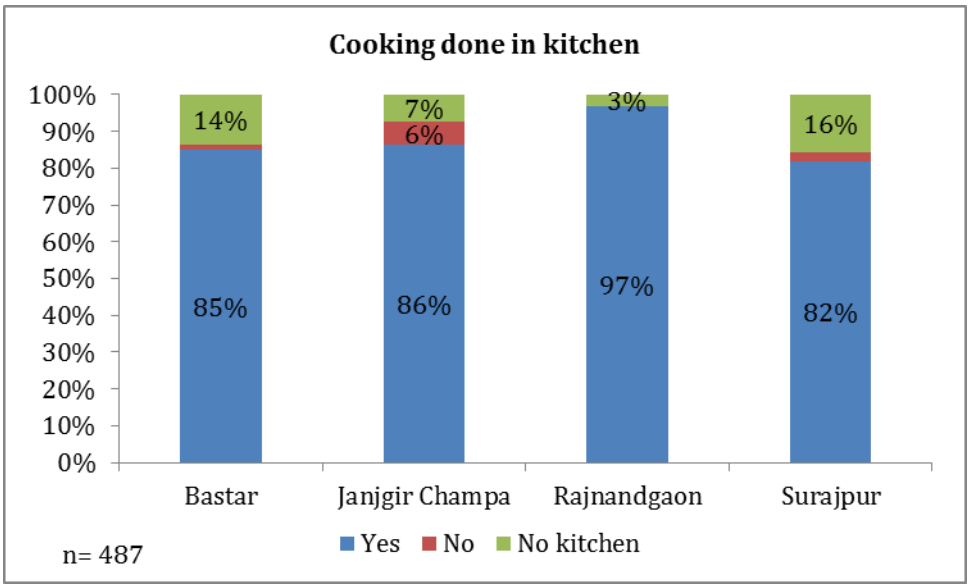
Table 4-5: Shortage of usable kitchens in tribal districts

	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Yes	86%	93%	97%	84%
Usable	76%	79%	95%	68%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

It was not surprising therefore to find more cooking being done in a space other than the kitchen in Bastar and Surajpur (see figure 4-1)[61]. Interestingly, in Janjgir Champa, while kitchen availability was not a constraint, our surveyors still reported observing mid-days meals being cooked in the open, in a shed or in a classroom, mainly because of the poor quality of kitchens built.

Figure 4-1: More schools in tribal districts observed to be cooking in a space other than the kitchen



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[61] If the survey team reached the school during cooking time, this was directly observed. In cases where we reached earlier or later, this was inferred on the observed condition of the kitchen and whether it looked like it was used or not.

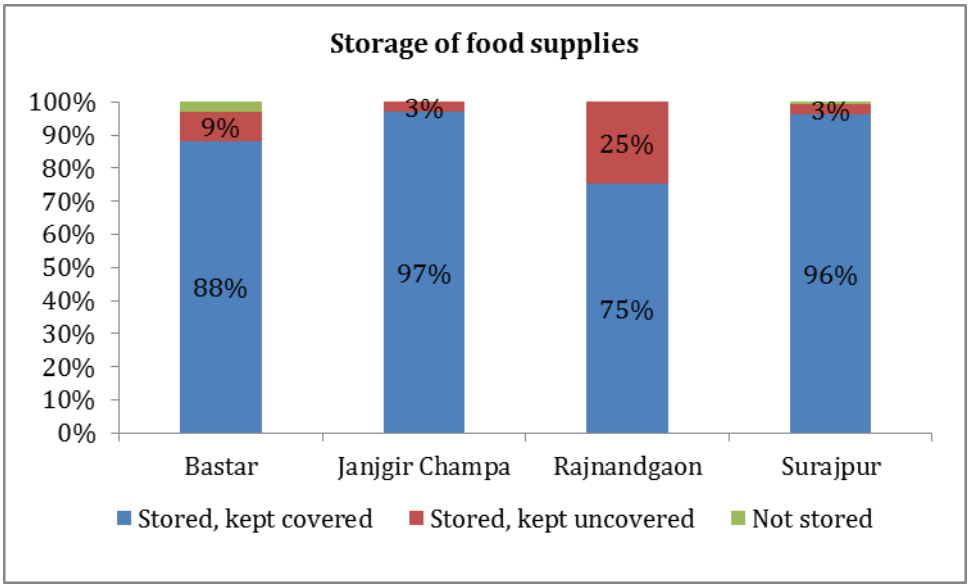
Interviews with the HMs and cooks revealed that this was the case mainly because kitchens that were built didn't have adequate ventilation or even a light source. Also, because they were built a while ago, many kitchens were in a decrepit condition and required repair or maintenance. The PAB 2016-17 notes that while a model and layout for an MDM kitchen has been provided by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD), Government of India, the actual construction costs often exceed the funds available and the construction agency makes its own designs to suit the budget. In an interview with our survey team, a DEO confirmed that the "norms for MDM infrastructure provision are generally inadequate." He stated that there are often "no windows" in the kitchen and even children usually sit in open areas such as "dusty playgrounds" to eat their meals.

The Chhattisgarh MDM PAB Minutes 2016-17 identify "slow pace" as an additional issue in the construction of MDM kitchen-cum-stores in schools – of the 47,879 primary and upper primary schools serving MDM, only 38,334 (80%) had constructed kitchen-cum-stores by the end of FY 2014-15. The PAB notes that "negligence" by the construction agency (Gram Panchayat) and delays in fund release from above (by the Zila and Janpad Panchayat) are two main reasons for this slow progress. The State government has now decided to designate the SMDC (School Management and Development Agency) as the construction agency for kitchen cum stores[62].

4.3.2 Storage facilities

While in a majority of all schools, grains were found well stored and covered; a significant number of schools in Rajnandgaon (25%) had stored their grains without any cover or measures of hygiene.

Figure 4-2: One in four schools in Rajnandgaon kept grains uncovered



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[62] GO dated 17th March 2015.

4.3.3 Availability of equipment and fuel for cooking

The availability of cooking equipment appeared to be a significant problem in Janjgir Champa with nearly a third of all cooks (SHG members) reporting that they didn't have access to adequate equipment for cooking the MDM.

Table 4-6: One in every three cooks who cooked mid-day meals in Janjgir Champa reported not having adequate cooking equipment

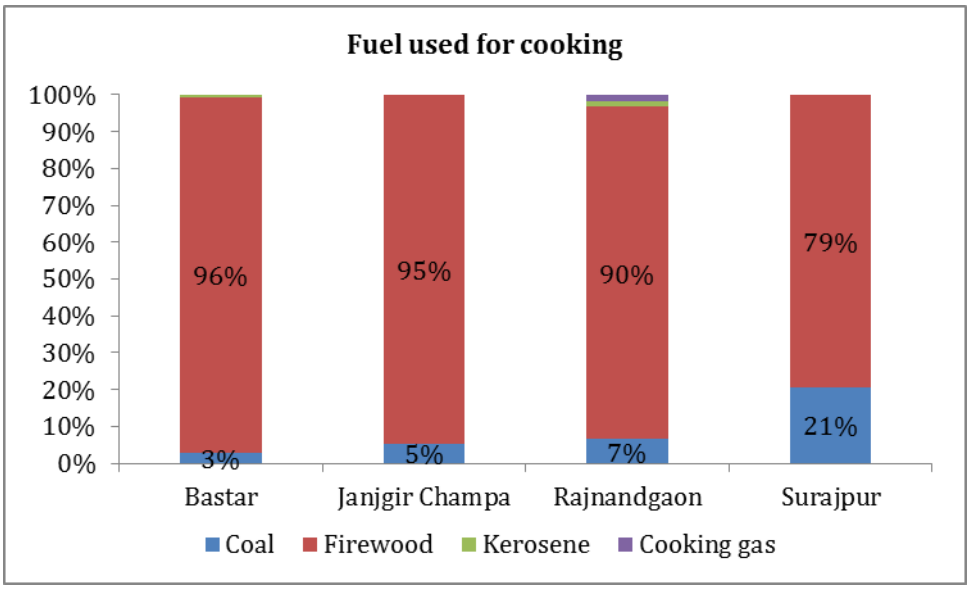
Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
12%	32%	11%	10%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

According to the AWP&B's of 2014-15 and 2015-16, Chhattisgarh has initiated a process of replacing its kitchen devices which are older than 6-7 years. Thus each year, schools are receiving directly, funds for buying these devices including cooking utensils. In FY2012-13 (progress reported in AWP&B 2014-15), Rs. 840 lakh was released to schools directly. Headmasters were asked to buy the needed equipment in consultation with the SHG cooking in the school and the SMC. At the close of FY 2014-15, Rs. 1539 lakhs had been released by the MHRD to Chhattisgarh for this purpose, of which the State had released Rs. 600 lakh to 27 districts[63]. However, the modality of transfer had been changed from the previous year, with the DEO's offices now being asked to purchase utensils and distribute to the schools as per their requirement.

The predominantly used fuel for cooking mid-day meals in schools is firewood. Few schools, highest in Surajpur (21%), reported using coal as the fuel for cooking.

Figure 4-3: Use of coal as fuel for cooking was relatively high in Surajpur



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[63] The AWP&B notes that the rest of the funding received from MHRD will be released in financial year 2015-16 after provision of funds in main budget.

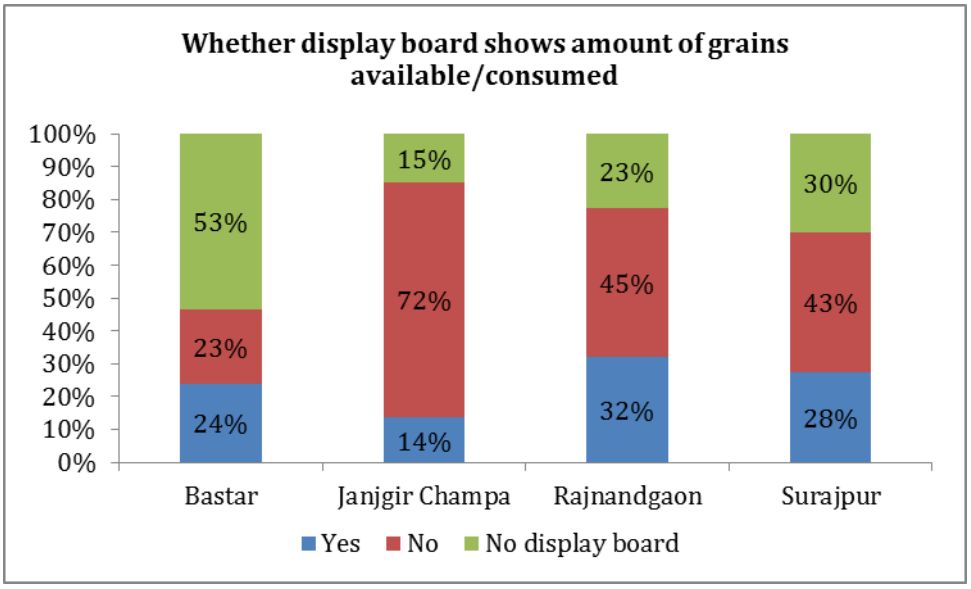
Both coal and wood, however, are known to cause indoor air pollution. The AWP&B 2015-16 asks districts to take appropriate steps at their level to address indoor air pollution caused due to use of these fuels. At the time of construction of the kitchen, for instance, districts are being asked now to make chimneys for proper ventilation. They are also being asked to look for other, local innovative solutions for modifying the kitchen shed design.

Availability of firewood also tends to serve as a constraint for cooking. Costs of firewood are to be covered from within the cooking costs (per child) made available to SHGs, which are often delayed (on this, see more in section 4.5). In some cases, wood is also difficult to gather given strict forest norms. Recognizing this, the AWP&B 2015-16 instructs district level officials to take support of the forest department in case of issues in fuel wood availability.

4.3.4 Display board

Chhattisgarh has made it mandatory for schools to have a board that displays: (1) the daily menu; and (2) the daily utilization of food grains and cooking cost[64]. However, of the schools surveyed, we found wide variation in availability of such display boards. Fifty three percent schools in Bastar and 30% in Surajpur did not have any such board. When such boards were available, only few displayed the amount of grains available and consumed, with Janjgir Champa being a particularly significant offender on this count (figure 4-4).

Figure 4-4: Very few schools displayed information on grain availability/consumption



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

4.3.5 Emphasis on hygiene

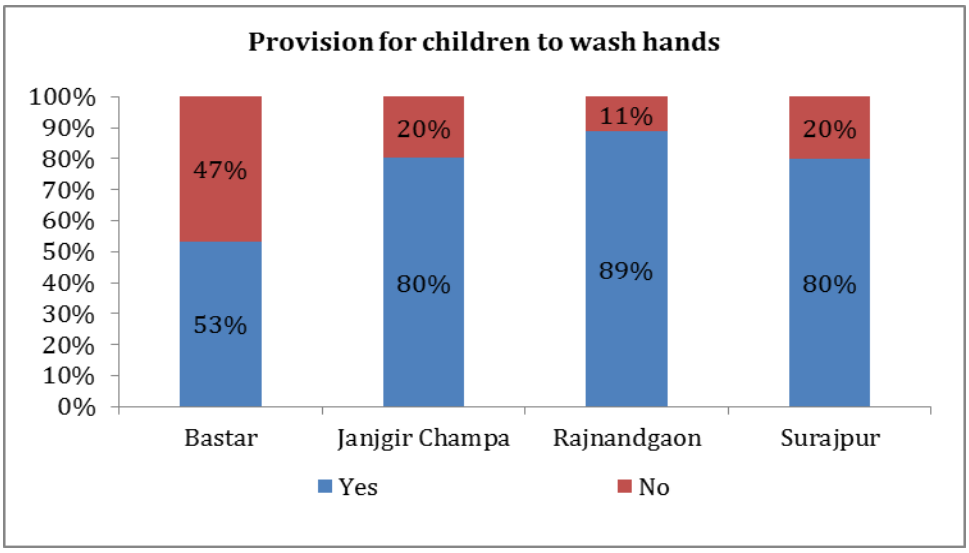
Given the overall policy emphasis on Swachchha Bharat nationally, we asked whether there was any provision for children (and cooks) to wash their hands before and after eating meals[65]. The GoCG has put in place guidelines to ensure that a facility to wash hands and soap are made available in all schools[66]. In about half the schools visited in Bastar, our surveyors did not see children washing their hands before

[64] PAB Minutes 2016-17.

[65] This could be either running water or even water stored and available for this purpose.

eating the mid-day meal. Even in the other districts, these numbers were substantial. Part of the reason they did not follow the practice could be just unavailability of water – 29% of the schools visited in Bastar did not have a usable hand pump or tap. In Rajnandgaon and Surajpur, when this facility was available, soap was also made available. However, only about half of schools with hand-wash facilities in Bastar and Janjgir Champa had any soap.

Figure 4-5: In about half the schools in Bastar, children did not wash hands before eating



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Figure 4-6: In Janjgir Champa, in about one in every two schools with hand wash provision, no soap was found

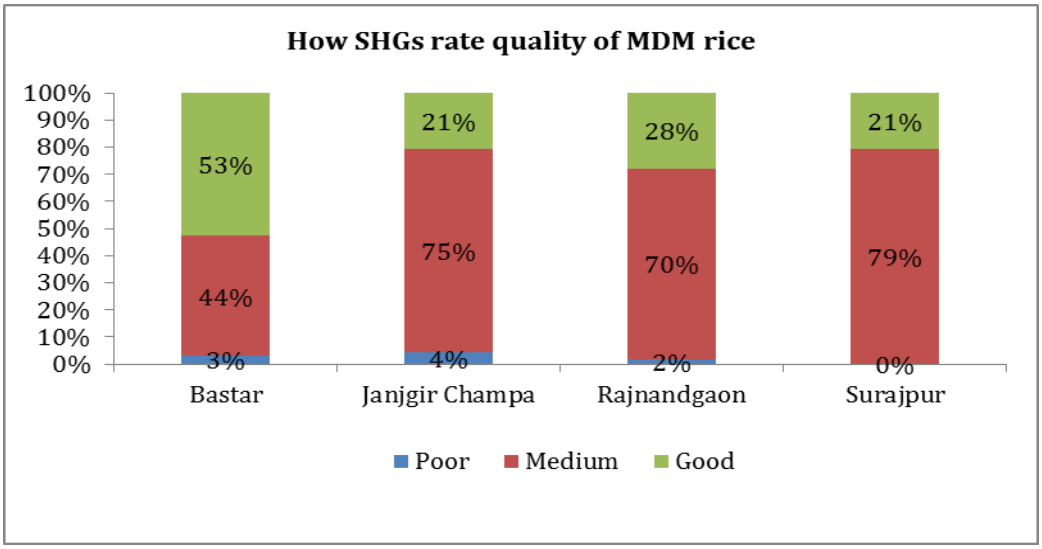
Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[66] All food handlers should remain clean, wear washed clothes and keep their finger nails trimmed, clean and wash their hands with soap/ detergent and water before commencing work and every time after touching, raw or contaminated food or using toilet. Support of the community members, including mothers' groups, should also be solicited to ensure that children wash their hands with soap before eating, use clean plates and glasses, avoid littering and wastage of food, and rinse their hands and mouth after eating. (Source: Guidelines on Food Safety and Hygiene for School Level Kitchens Under Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme, available on MDM CG website).

4.4 Quality of food grains and meals

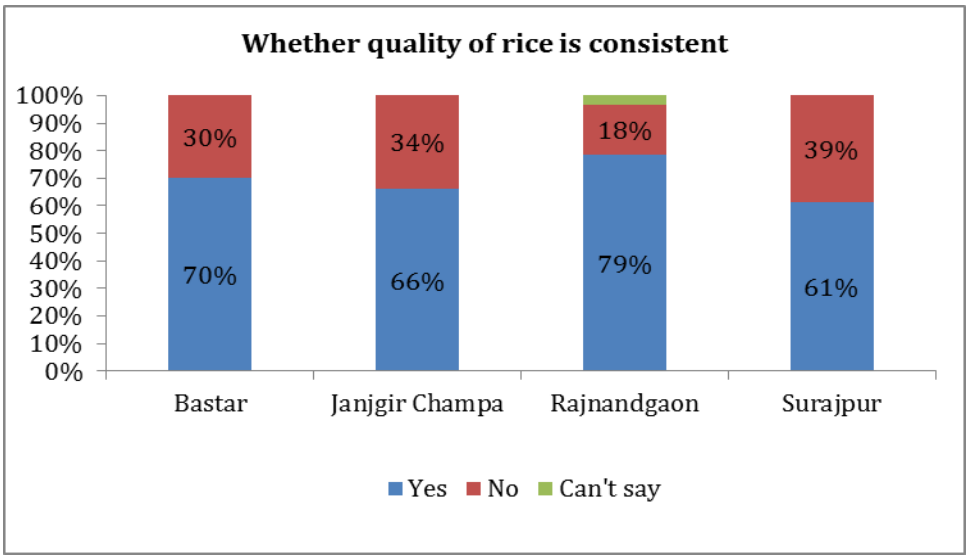
All cook-cum-helpers/SHGs attached to schools rated quality of grains received for MDM as either good or medium with only a rare exception rating it as poor[67] (see figure 4-7). However, quality varied across months, with inconsistency being reported by nearly one-third of SHGs interviewed in all districts, except Rajnandgaon (figure 4-8)[68].

Figure 4-7: Very few SHGs rated quality of rice as poor



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Figure 4-8: Quality of rice was inconsistent across months in all districts except Rajnandgaon



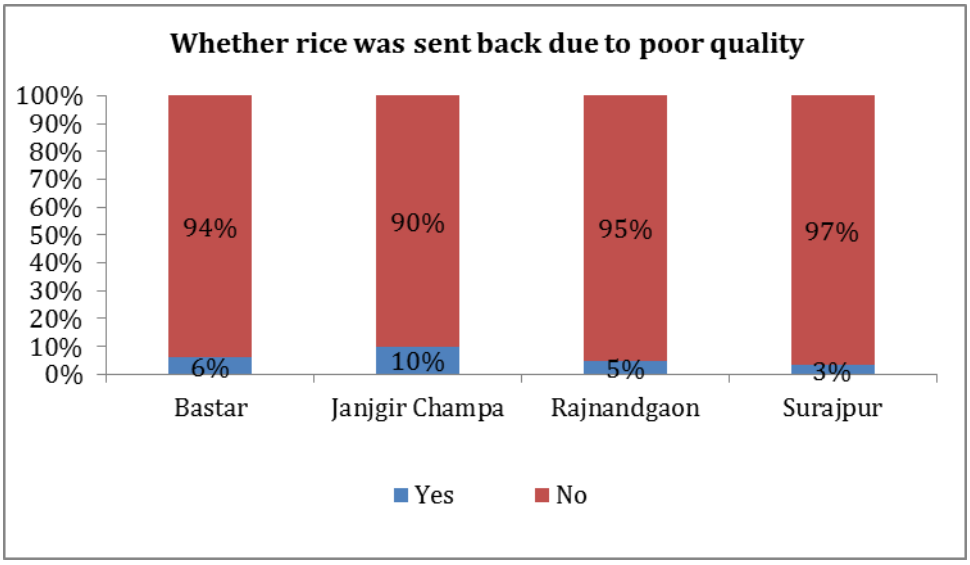
Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[67] In its guidelines for delivery of food grains at the district level, FCI promises to ensure "continuous availability of adequate quantity of good quality foodgrains, which will be in any case not less than Fair Average Quality (FAQ)". Schools are instructed to lift grains only if they are found to be of fair average quality. For more details, see MDM guidelines available at: http://mdm.nic.in/Files/Guidelines/4.Dec_of_FCI.pdf

[68] At the time of gathering data for this report, there were several news stories of inferior quality rice being supplied, particularly in far-flung tribal areas, as a means to pilferage good quality rice to shops and mill owners. We did not investigate the issue. However, the fact that our respondents reported variable quality of rice is of concern.

We asked the SHGs what recourse they took in case they found the rice to be of poor quality. Very few said that they had sent the grains back because of poor quality in the year prior to the survey, with numbers being slightly higher in Janjgir Champa than in other districts (figure 4-9). Others mostly ended up complaining to the PDS store or their panchayat. While the FCI allows testing a sample of foodgrains within 3 months of the stock being received from the FCI depot to address veracity of complaints regarding grain quality, we did not hear of any such tests being performed in the course of our fieldwork.

Figure 4-9: One in ten SHGs in Janjgir Champa reported sending rice back because of poor quality in the year prior to the survey



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

The overall quality of meals served goes beyond the mere quality of inputs such as food grains and expands to areas of food hygiene, nutrition and safety. Training of MDM cooks thus forms an integral part of the challenge of ensuring quality. Chhattisgarh has taken several steps in this regard. A consultation has been organized by the Department of School Education, GoCG and UNICEF at the state level to review the status of implementation of the MDM scheme, for improving its effectiveness to contribute towards child nutrition, hygiene, health and thereby the quality of education. Low cost alternative models of hand washing (assembled using local items such as bamboo poles, rope, jerry can and a soap for washing hands with tippy tap) are being discussed. The PAB minutes 2016-17 note the organization of training sessions at the cluster level. For this, the State has engaged 155 master trainers trained by the Akshay Patra Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The Department of School Education, Chhattisgarh, has also made a 30-minutes long documentary drama to train cooks. Special emphasis has been made to train them to wear head gears and gloves at the time of cooking[69]. However, owing to paucity of funds, the training has not been executed and delivered to the State's own satisfaction. The AWP&B 2015-16 notes that most schools are not strictly following the guidelines on using headgears. Part of the reason cooks fail to follow these instructions is lack of funding. The APW&B 2015-16 notes for instance lack of funding to buy aprons, headgear and other material for cooks. These funds can be taken out of funds for MME i.e. funds reserved from MHRD for managing,

[69] Also see http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/chhattisgarh-government-starts-training-for-mid-day-meal-cooks-529586.

monitoring and evaluating the scheme. However, limited reserves in that account mean that this need cannot be fulfilled. The GoCG has therefore put in a request to MHRD for an additional grant of Rs. 327 lakhs to finance roughly two kits of uniforms for the over 1 lakh CCH in the state (at a cost of approximately Rs. 150 per kit).

Our own survey data confirms the skepticism discussed in the annual work plan and budget documents regarding the gap in training. Of all the SHGs interviewed by our survey, many had not received training on aspects related to hygiene in the past one year. Interestingly, Bastar performed much better than the other districts in this regard (table 4-7).

Table 4-7: Percentage of SHGs that did not receive training on cooking

Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
16%	28%	23%	34%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Finally, the Chhattisgarh government mandates that the Headmasters of all schools (or teachers appointed by them) taste meals by rotation, before they are served to children. Every school is required to maintain a daily register that records that food has been tasted and checked. These registers can be called in anytime for inspection. We did see these checks being performed by the headmaster and teachers in the schools that we visited[70]. In addition, SMCs are asked to monitor quality of meals, and in the event of a mishap, can call a toll-free number to register a complaint. Cases of few such complaints being registered are noted in the annual work plans and budget documents.

4.5 Grain allocation, disbursement and availability

4.5.1 Grain allocation and disbursement

According to MDM Guidelines[71], food grains are allocated bi-annually to states by the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSeL), MHRD. The first six monthly allocation is made in the first week of February i.e. before the start of a new financial year. The allocation is made on the basis of number of children enrolled and number of school days, both approved by the PAB of MDM for the previous year, and therefore is somewhat of an ad hoc transfer. The second and final allocation is made in the first week of August and is based on Utilization Certificates (UCs) sent by the State Government by the previous financial year. These UCs detail the quantity of food grains received and actually consumed at the school level in the previous financial year and are to be submitted by the state latest by 30 June each year. The second instalment of grain allocation is made after taking into account the unspent grain balance available with the state (both in terms of the balance from the previous year's allocation as well as the current allocation received in February).

[70] The issue of quality first came into national limelight after a tragic incident in Bihar in 2013 when 23 children died after consuming the mid-day meal in their school. States have become more vigilant about quality after the incident. In Chhattisgarh, for instance, schools have been given a 21-point guideline which includes: ensuring that CCH wash their hand before preparing meal and sweep the room; school children wash their hand before taking meals; a display board gives an emergency contact number in case of an untoward incident etc.

[71] MDM guidelines: http://mdm.nic.in/Files/Guidelines/4.Dec_of_FCI.pdf

On receiving the food grain instalment from GoI, the State's MDM Directorate prepares an allocation letter detailing the district-wise allocations of food grains, based on the number of students enrolled and the number of working days approved for that particular district. Chhattisgarh is the first state in India to decentralize food grains allocation and transportation to the district level. In Chhattisgarh, food grains are supplied by a decentralized agency called the Nagrik Apurti Nigam (NAN) which serves as a nodal organization for lifting and transporting grains from the State's Civil Supplies Department (which in turn receives grain from FCI) to Fair Price Shops.

The functioning of NAN is based entirely on an online system where data on grain consumption is fed on a monthly basis, starting from the school upwards to the BEO and the DEO offices. At the school level, the number of children being served mid-day meals is noted daily in an MDM register. At the end of the month, the daily attendance numbers for that month are entered by Headmasters in a prescribed format provided by the BEO of the concerned block. The format also calls for mentioning available stock of food grain in the school, and unspent balances from the previous month which are to be verified with a signature of the headmaster and the head of the SHG responsible for cooking in the school. The cluster coordinator is charged with the task of assembling such formats from all schools in his or her cluster, and submitting them to the BEO office between the 1st and the 5th of the next month.

It is at the BEO office that a nodal officer for MDM enters the information coming in from all schools using an online monitoring software. Data entry takes place with the help of a computer operator, and has to be completed before the 7th of every month. The software automatically calculates the allotment of rice for each school for the forthcoming month on the basis of average rate of attendance and grain balances.

Before the 8th of every month, the BEO offices forward calculations for grain allotment to the DEO's office through the software. At the district level, this information is checked for accuracy and forwarded to the State's Naagrik Aapoorti Nigam (NAN). Between the 11th and 25th of every month, the offices of the NAN arrange for allocating rice to the District Manager under Civil Supplies Department in each district, who subsequently arranges for the grain to be transferred to fair price shops. For each shop, the allotment for MDM is calculated based on the data gathered for schools mapped to these shops.

At the same time, the BEO generates a "coupon" for each school's needs – this coupon reflects the school's entitlement to rice in the coming month(s)[72] and can be used to 'buy' rice from the local PDS store. The SHGs arrange for lifting food grains from the local PDS store between the 25th and 30th of each month. These dates are summarized in table 4-8 below.

[72] A coupon may be generated for more than one month's needs and disbursed accordingly

Table 4-8: Timeline for Grain and Coupon Allocation, and Grain Pick-up

Dates	Activity
1st – 5th	CC: takes formats (incl. grain consumed/unspent balances) from schools in his/her cluster; deposits in the BEO office
6th –7th	BEO office: Nodal officer + Computer Operator complete data entry in online format, forward calculations to DEO's office
8th – 10th	DEO office: checks for accuracy; forwards to NAN
11th – 25th	NAN: Transfers grains to District Manager, Civil Supplies Department – transfers to FPS
11th – 25th	DEO: sends approved allocation to BEO – generates two part coupons (1 copy for schools/SHGs, 1 for PDS store) – distributes through CC
25th – 30th	SHGs pick up grain

Once the SHG lifts its allocation, this information is fed upwards into the same software. The DEO offices verify this data, and send it to the state office of NAN and the MDM Cell at the Directorate of Public Instruction. After getting the figures of lifted rice from all districts, a bill is raised by NAN on a quarterly basis, and settled with the State's Civil Supplies Department. The payment of cost of food grain and transportation charges is made at the state level.

In terms of the GoI-GoCG settlement with regard to food grain, the Government of India is entirely responsible for supplying grain as per the norms per child, per meal mandated by the scheme. An annual allocation for grains is made for each state based on the demand expressed in the state's annual work plan and budget document[73]. The FCI is accordingly asked to allocate and release grains to all states. In the case of Chhattisgarh, the State Civil Supplies Department reallocates food grain to their agencies of concerned districts through NAN.

Chhattisgarh's online system of food allocation and release is put forth as a model for all states to reduce leakage and ensure regular supply of food grains. It is also easy to monitor as opposed to a manual system, which takes much longer to compile. All reports in the online system viz. quantity of grains used, quantity of grains still in stock, number of children enrolled and attending, number of children fed, working days in a month – can be seen live, and downloaded easily for public and official scrutiny.

4.5.2 Grain availability

Since food grain allocation and lifting are streamlined through an online system, inadequacy in supplies is rarely anticipated. In the event that it occurs, the Government of Chhattisgarh has instructed its District Collectors to draw food grains from other programmes, to fulfill MDM needs.

While many HMs interviewed reported that in general they receive the grains they need to serve MDM, SHGs cooking for schools in all districts (albeit a few) reported problems of inadequate grain availability. The only exception was the district of Surajpur.

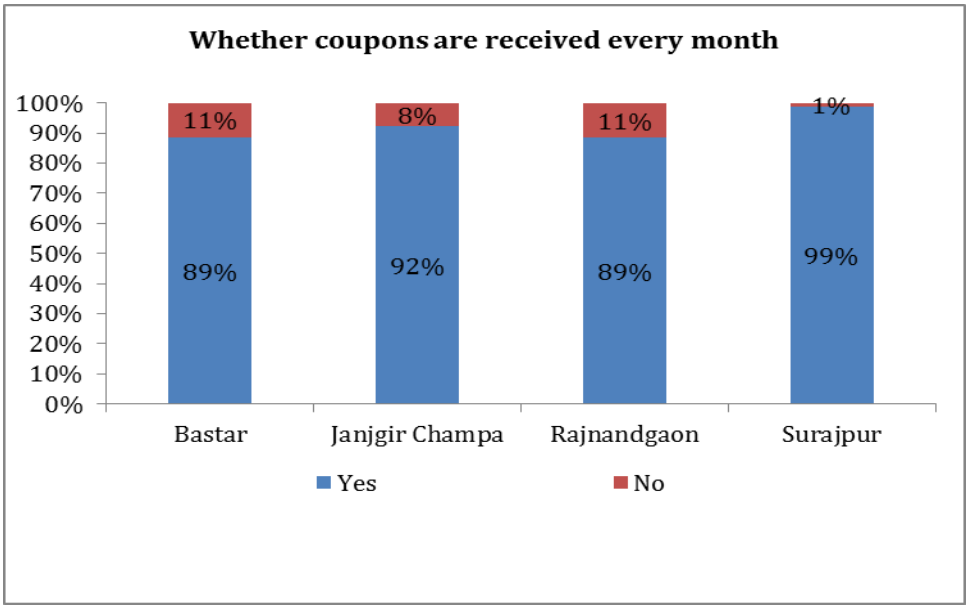
[73] States are to fund any shortfall over and above the grain demand expressed in the annual work plan and budget document.

There are three potential reasons that might explain the shortfall. First, there might be delays in receiving the coupon used to pick-up rice from the PDS store. That is, schools/SHGs may not get coupons every month. Second, there might be a perception that the grain entitlement is insufficient. Grain entitlements, of course, change monthly depending on a school's consumption and unspent balance of grain. Finally, SHGs may not be receiving even the quantity of grain that the coupon entitles them to. We discuss each of these reasons below.

As discussed earlier, all grain disbursements are made through a system of "coupons" – or physical pieces of paper that carry a school's rice entitlement for a given month. These coupons are issued by the BEO's office and used by the schools/SHGs to 'buy' rice from the PDS. The entitlement reflected on each school's coupon is calculated based on the previous month's utilization and unspent balances. In most cases, these coupons are received on a monthly basis and used to lift grains from the PDS on a monthly basis. However, when they are not, this could be the result of two factors: (1) a coupon is issued for a rice quantity that covers more than one month's need; and (2) there is a delay in generation and distribution of this coupon.

Of course, the implications of the two are very different – one indicates a procedural idiosyncrasy while the other reflects inefficiency. Unfortunately, the data we have does not allow us to make this distinction in a precise manner but given that inadequacy of rice is not a *significant* problem, we can assume it to be the former rather than the latter. Often, coupons were not reported to be received in months of May, June and July. This is because either no meals were served for most of these months (May and June) or unutilized opening balances were available for the schools to tide over without any need for a fresh issue of coupons. Also, some of the schools are situated in remote areas which are completely cut off from the rest of the State in times of rain – the SHGs then lift more than a month's supply of grain at one time and store it for 3-4 months.

Figure 4-10: SHGs mostly report receiving coupons on a monthly basis; delays in May/June

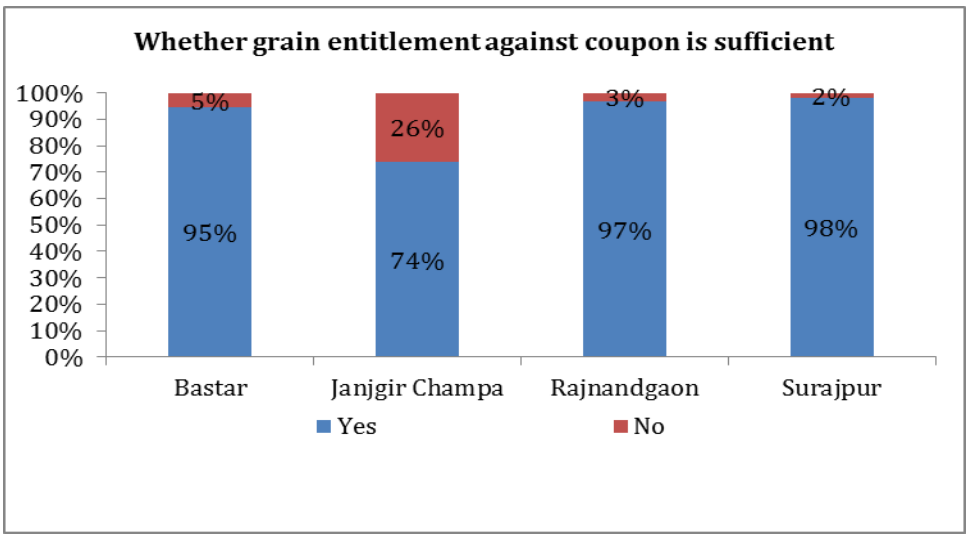


Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

The second potential reason could be the perception that the entitlements given against the coupons are not sufficient to cover school needs. Twenty six percent of SHGs interviewed in Janjgir Champa reported

that their school's monthly entitlements as defined by the coupons were low and insufficient to meet MDM needs (figure 4-11). At the same time, the number of meals served as per the headmaster's records suggests that schools in the district may be over-reporting consumption of food grain (table 4-3). This perception among the cooks cooking the MDM could be driven partially by the fact that Janjgir Champa is the most populous district of our sample, with the average number of students per primary school being as high as 79, nearly 1.5 times the strength of students in primary schools in other sampled districts.

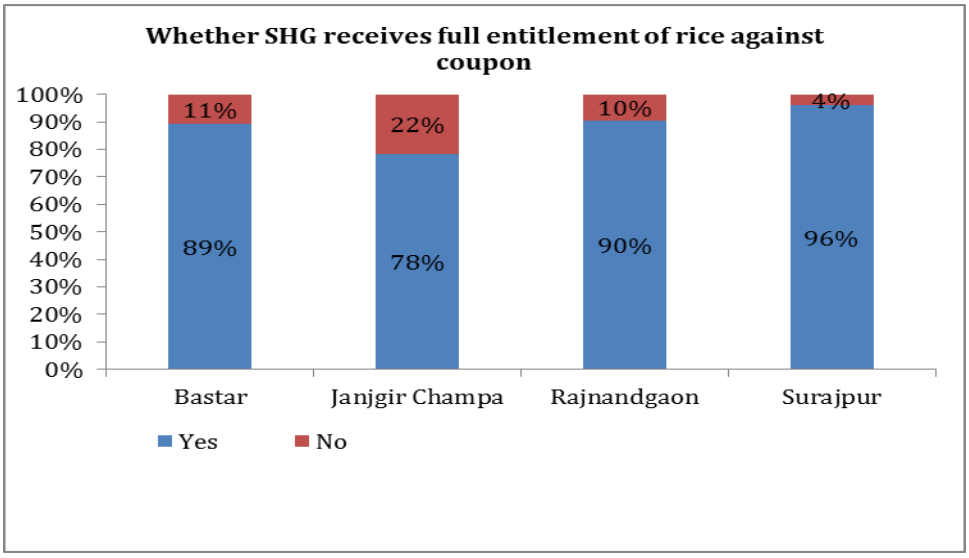
Figure 4-11: One of four SHGs in Janjgir Champa found quantity of rice entitled by coupons insufficient



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

However, what is concerning is that 22% of SHGs interviewed in Janjgir Champa said they didn't even receive their full grain entitlements against the coupons. The shortfalls were mostly felt in the months of June and July right after schools opened post the summer holidays.

Figure 4-12: One in every five SHGs in Janjgir Champa reported not receiving their full quota of grains entitled by the coupon



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

An officer in the Janjgir Champa district office said that one of the main reasons for this shortfall is general scarcity of grains at the PDS. The shop receives rice for multiple schemes and disbursements are made on a first-come-first-serve basis.

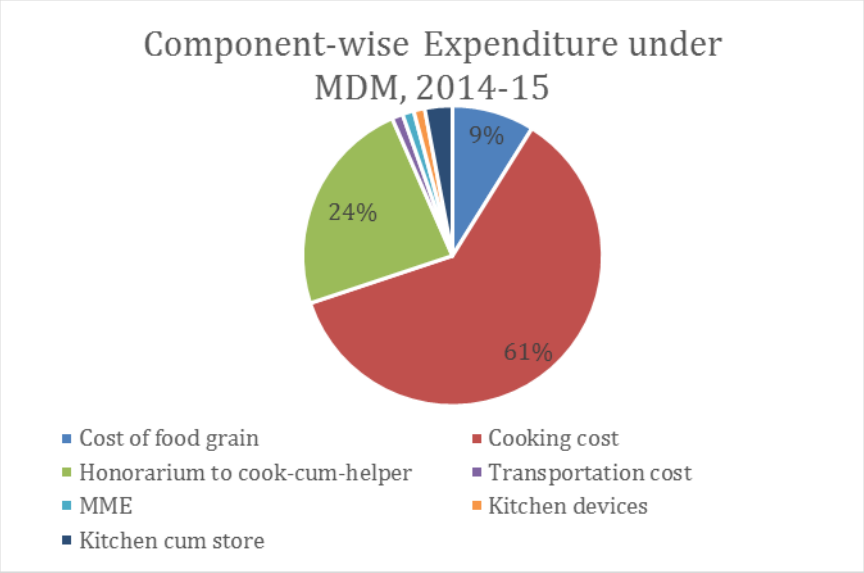
A DEO reported that in times of shortfall, his office is authorized to direct the district NAN office (or even other The DEO informed SHGs) to fill the gap. SHGs also reported that when short of grains, they borrowed rice from the community or went to the HM for help.

4.6 Cooking costs, honorariums for cooks, transportation costs

This section presents survey findings on the timeliness of key money flows under the scheme. The survey findings are complimented by secondary budget data to identify where the gaps, if any, may lie.

The two important heads under which funds are spent under the MDM are: (1) payments for cooking costs (made to the SHGs in Chhattisgarh); and (2) honorariums paid to the cook-cum-helper (CCH) (figure 4-13).

Figure 4-13: Over 60% of MDM funds in 2014-15 were spent on cooking costs, 24% on the CCH's honorarium and 9% on food grain



Source: Expenditure statement for the 3 FYs (UCs).

As the chart above shows, over 60% of all MDM spending in FY 2014-15 was towards the cooking costs and 24% was spent on the CCH's honorarium.

Based on survey data alone, it is very challenging to carry out a detailed analysis of cooking cost payments made to SHGs under the MDM. While all efforts were made to collect MDM fund flow data from SHGs, the limits of data availability and poor record maintenance on the ground made this a near impossible exercise. First, a typical SHG engages in more than just the provisioning of MDM to one school. It may be serving MDM to other schools, it may also be providing hot meals to an anganwadi, ready-to-eat packets under ICDS and serving as a micro-lending institution. Each of these activities is associated with multiple flows of

money and many SHGs maintain only one passbook for all their work.[74] This makes it difficult to cull out only MDM-specific (and school-specific) information from an SHG's passbook and cashbooks. Moreover, passbooks were often found filled by hand (ineligibly) and were rarely up-to-date. SHG members were often poorly educated and/or not trained enough, unable to interpret their own passbook data.

Second, even as substantial money flows to the SHGs under the scheme, there is very little or no emphasis by the State or district administration to ensure that the SHGs keep their records in order – we found no mention of any such training or checks by the administration in this regard.

4.6.1 Cooking costs

Funds for the cooking costs are paid directly by the state treasury into district accounts. District Education Officers draw on these funds and disburse cooking costs through e-transfers to block offices, which then transfer onward to SHGs. Provision for cooking costs' is made in the state budget in the ratio of central and state assistance, prior to sanction of AWP&B.

Secondary data on the budget allocations, releases and expenditures against cooking costs is available for the four districts up to the third quarters of FYs 2013-14 and 2014-15. Using these numbers, we find that GoCG had released 90% of its share of the cooking costs money, and the GoI nearly three fourths by the third quarter of 2013-14 (table 4-9). However, the districts had not spent the entire money released to them. If spending is seen as a proportion of the total cooking cost allocation, then the average district in our sample had spent only about 50% of its allocation by Q3.

Table 4-9: Districts had spent only a proportion of cooking costs money released to them by Q3, FY 2013-14

2013-14	Cooking Costs Funds Released as Proportion of Allocation		Cooking cost Funds Spent by the District As a proportion of cooking cost Funds Released to it
	By GoI	By State	
Rajnandgaon	77%	90%	66%
Janjgir Champa	77%	90%	69%
Surajpur	77%	90%	67%
Bastar	77%	90%	65%
Sample average	77%	90%	68%

Source: AWP&B Tables for FY 2014-15 and FY 2013-14

While we don't have detailed data on the exact timing of these releases (by month), 2014-15 PAB minutes note that 45% of cooking cost funds had been released by the State in Q1 of FY 2013-14 itself, without waiting for Central assistance[75]. In the absence of any more detail, we can't make comments on the

[74] Only in Bastar 90% of all SHGs maintained a separate passbook for their MDM account. 75% in Janjgir Champa, 70% in Rajnandgaon and 37% in Surajpur did so.

[75] The State has made repeated commitments to PABs on making payments to cooking agencies in advance of one month. PAB 2014-15 notes that the State will implement a "Green Channel Scheme" ensuring that: (1) funds are provided for cooking costs under the State budget even before the sanction of the AWP&B; (2) all districts will release cooking cost funds a month in advance to the cooking agencies; and (3) all district officers will submit a certificate to the State office every month to certify that this has been done.

lumpiness of GoI releases i.e. whether funds were released evenly across the first three quarters or not. This can also impact district-level spending. There was no district-level variation in these trends in FY 2013-14.

Data for FY 2014-15 is also available for the first three quarters and shows that on average, the proportion of funds released by both GoI and the State government by Q3 declined and the State government matched GoI's contribution. There were also significant district-level variations. In Janjgir Champa, only 68% of the allocated funds were released by Q3, while in Surajpur 75% were released by Q3. As a proportion of funds released to them, districts spent much more than they did in FY 2013-14 (87-88%) (table 4-10). On average, and as a percentage of allocated funds, districts had spent 62% of their allocated funds by Q3 FY 2014-15. However, part of this spending may potentially be funds carried forward from the previous financial year. Secondary data isn't available for the fourth quarter for either of these years to allow us to close the analytical loop.

Table 4-10: Districts had spent most of the cooking cost monies released to them by Q3, FY 2014-15

2014-15	Funds Released as Proportion of Allocation		Funds Spent by the District As a proportion of Funds Released to it
	By GoI	By State	
Rajnandgaon	73%	73%	87%
Janjgir Champa	68%	68%	88%
Surajpur	75%	75%	87%
Bastar	73%	73%	87%
State	72%	71%	87%

Source: AWP&B Tables for FY 2015-16 and FY 2014-15

What explains delays in releases (which then impact spending)? PAB Minutes for 2016-17 note the following potential reasons.

First, until recently, the budget provisioning for MDM was done by two departments i.e. the Department of School Education for 61 Blocks of 14 districts, and the Tribal Welfare Department (TWD) for 85 Blocks for the remaining 17 districts. This division in compilation resulted in delays in expenditure reports which formed the basis for future budgetary allocations and releases. The PAB minutes note that even though all schools with the TWD have now been merged under the Education Department (GO Dated March 10, 2015), MDM continues to be administered separately. It is proposed that this too will be integrated under one department in the coming financial year i.e. FY 2016-17.

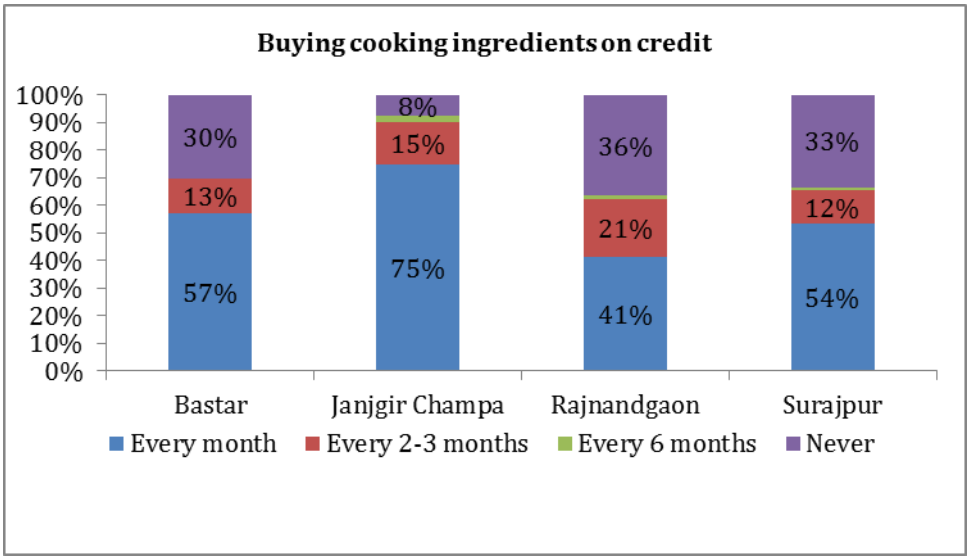
Second, delays may occur at the level of the State treasury if it raises objections to some bills. Third, districts fail to transfer money into SHG accounts if incorrect bank details are provided. Finally and often times, the SHGs themselves fail to visit banks, update their accounts regularly to reflect inflows and outflows, and withdraw money. Thus what may appear to have been a delay on account of the State in releasing money may not in fact be so.

Based on our survey experience in the field, the last two reasons are highly plausible and make a strong case for better integration, training and monitoring of SHGs implementing MDM in the State.

Irrespective, and on the ground, low spending on cooking costs, affects delivery of MDM. A school head master in Surajpur, for instance, explained how money for cooking costs was "routinely" not being made available and that block and district officers had been made aware of this. Since the number of enrolled children in the school was low, no SHG was willing to come on board for the MDM and the HM had been handling the scheme on his own. The cooking cost funds were supposed to be transferred to the SMCs account (since no SHG was in place) but hadn't reached for "3 months".

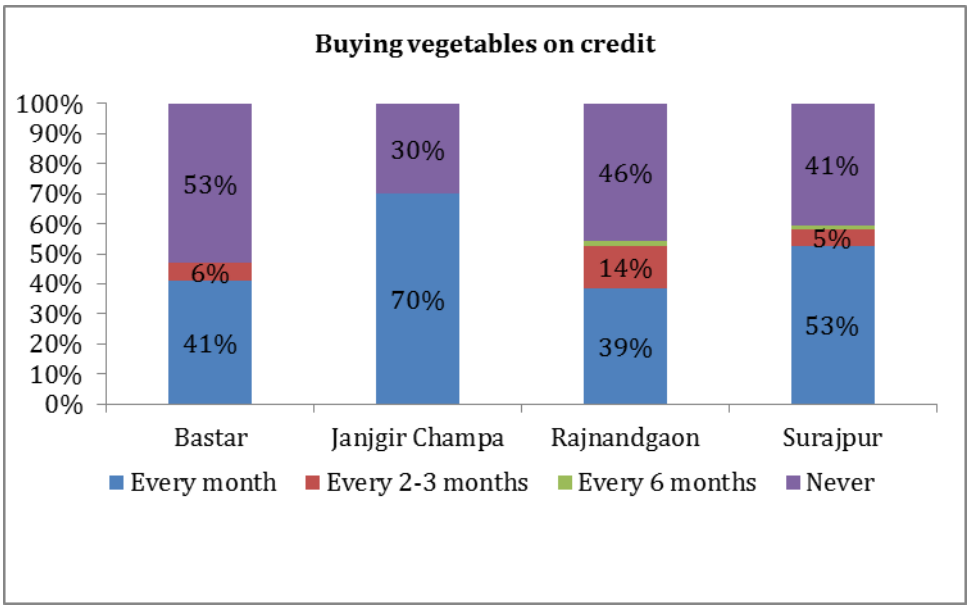
In schools where SHGs were in place, a significant proportion reported 'routinely' buying cooking ingredients and vegetables on credit from the local market. While this may partly be a reflection of the general nature of economic exchange in a rural economy, seen together with secondary data given above, such significant use of credit to buy cooking ingredients and vegetables is also reflective of SHGs not receiving their dues in time (figures 4-14 and 4-15). The problem appears particularly acute in Janjgir Champa.

Figure 4-14: Three in every four SHGs in Janjgir Champa reported buying oil, pulses, salt and other cooking ingredients on credit on a monthly basis



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey

Figure 4-15: Majority of SHGs in Janjgir Champa reported buying vegetables on credit every month



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey

To address the issue of purchase on credit, the Government of Chhattisgarh has introduced, recently, some innovations. Kitchen gardens are being promoted, for instance, on a pilot basis using MME funds. According to the AWP&B 2015-16, 15 of the 146 blocks in the state had received Rs. 1 lakh each in FY 2014-15 to be divided across 10 schools in the block (Rs. 10,000 each) so they could cultivate a kitchen garden.

4.6.2 Honorariums for cook-cum-helpers

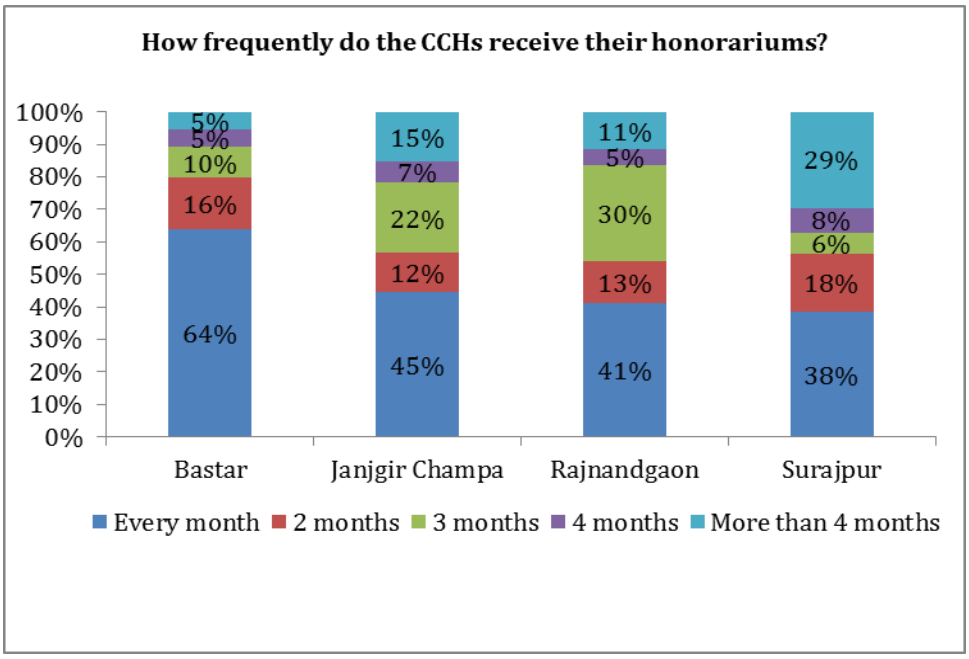
The second important channel through which funds flow under MDM are payments made to the cook-cum-helper (CCH). The state of Chhattisgarh pays a higher honorarium than what is mandated by the GoI for CCH's i.e. Rs. 1200 per month as opposed to Rs. 1000 per month, to incentivize cooks to perform and serve better. The additional Rs. 200 is paid by the State over and above the scheme norms[76]. These payments are transferred from the State to the districts and the blocks, which finally transfer these directly to the CCHs' accounts (through e-payments or account payee cheques).

On average, and worryingly so, about half of all CCH surveyed reported that they had not received their honorarium on time (figure 4-16)[77]. Surajpur lies at one extreme end of the spectrum with only 38% of the CCH interviewed receiving their honorarium in time, and nearly 30% facing a delay of over 4 months. Bastar does better than the other 3 districts with only a third of its CCHs reporting a delay in honorarium payments.

[76] MDM PAB Minutes 2015-16.

[77] Since passbooks were not available with many SHGs, and it was hard to ascertain which receipt was against which allocation, the responses on honorarium delays were based entirely on the perception of the respondent i.e. the CCH.

Figure 4-16: Significant delays in payment of CCH honorariums across districts



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

In an interview to us, a DEO agreed to delays in receiving and disbursing amounts for CCH honorariums, blaming it largely on poor banking networks in distant areas. Yet Bastar, a tribal district with poor overall infrastructure (including roads, banks etc.), reports the least problems on salary delays (figure 4-16).

Once again, secondary data on budgetary allocation, release and spending against CCH payments is only available until the third quarter of FYs 2013-14 and 2014-15 (tables 4-11 and 4-12). The data for FY 2013-14 show that while release was not as much of an issue in this fiscal, there was significant under-spending, with districts spending only about half of their budgetary allocations for CCH honorariums by Q3. This is when nearly all allocated funds had been released by the GoI and GoCG by the third quarter.

The proportion of funds being released declined in FY 2014-15, with only 61% of funds allocated for CCH honorariums being released by the third quarter of the financial year. However, owing to previous balances lying unspent, districts were able to spend 114-115% of the releases by Q3. Spending out of allocations still remained at 69%.

Table 4-11: Only half of the funds released for CCH honorariums were spent by Q3, FY 2013-14

2013-14	Funds released as a proportion of allocation		Funds spent by the district as a proportion of funds released	Funds spent by the district as a proportion of funds allocated
	By GOI	By State		
Rajnandgaon	88%	99%	54%	50%
Janjgir Champa	88%	99%	54%	50%
Surajpur	88%	99%	54%	50%
Bastar	88%	99%	54%	50%
State	88%	99%	54%	50%

Source: AWP&B Tables for FY 2014-15 and FY 2013-14

Table 4-12: GOI and State had only released about 61% of funds allocated for CCH honorariums by Q3, FY 2014-15

2014-15	Funds released as a proportion of allocation		Funds spent by the district as a proportion of funds released	Funds spent by the district as a proportion of funds allocated
	By GOI	By State		
Rajnandgaon	61%	61%	115%	69%
Janjgir Champa	61%	61%	115%	69%
Surajpur	61%	61%	114%	69%
Bastar	61%	61%	115%	69%
State	61%	61%	114%	69%

Source: AWP&B Tables for FY 2015-16 and FY 2014-15

A major reason behind low spending of CCH payment funds in FY 2013-14 was high CCH vacancies in the financial year[78]. Nearly 30% of approved CCH posts lay vacant in the State in FY 2013-14. This fell drastically to about 1% in the next year, allowing the State to use up both new releases as well as funds carried forward from the previous year (table 4-13).

Table 4-13: CCH vacancy rates fell significantly from 28% in FY 2013-14 to around 1% in FY 2014-15

CCH Vacancy	2013-14	2014-15
Rajnandgaon	28.4%	0.8%
Janjgir Champa	28.4%	0.9%
Surajpur	28.4%	1.1%
Bastar	28.5%	1.0%
State	28.4%	1.2%

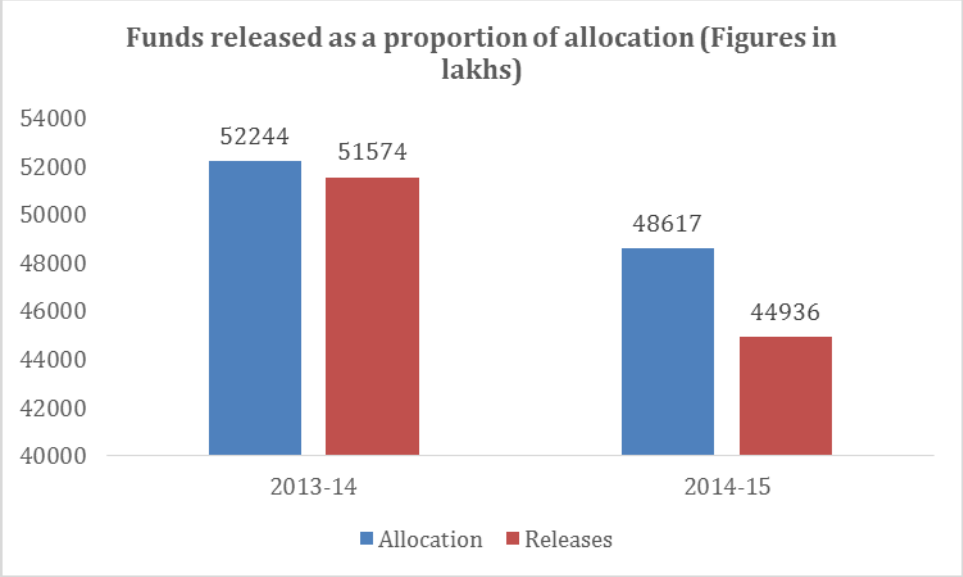
Source: AWP&B Tables for FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15

Based on PAB Minutes 2014-15, three other potential reasons can be identified for low spending in FY 2013-14: (1) Decline in coverage of children being served MDM in primary schools (from 25 lakh in 2011-12 to 21 lakh in 2012-13 and to 19 lakh in 2013-14); and (2) fewer working days in 2013-14 (149 days covered against 166 approved).

Under-spending in FY 2013-14 on both CCH payments and cooking costs funds were noted by the PAB, and MDM allocations to Chhattisgarh declined, overall, by 7% in FY 2014-15 (figure 4-17). Spending under the scheme, however, has significantly improved between FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15 (figure 4-18).

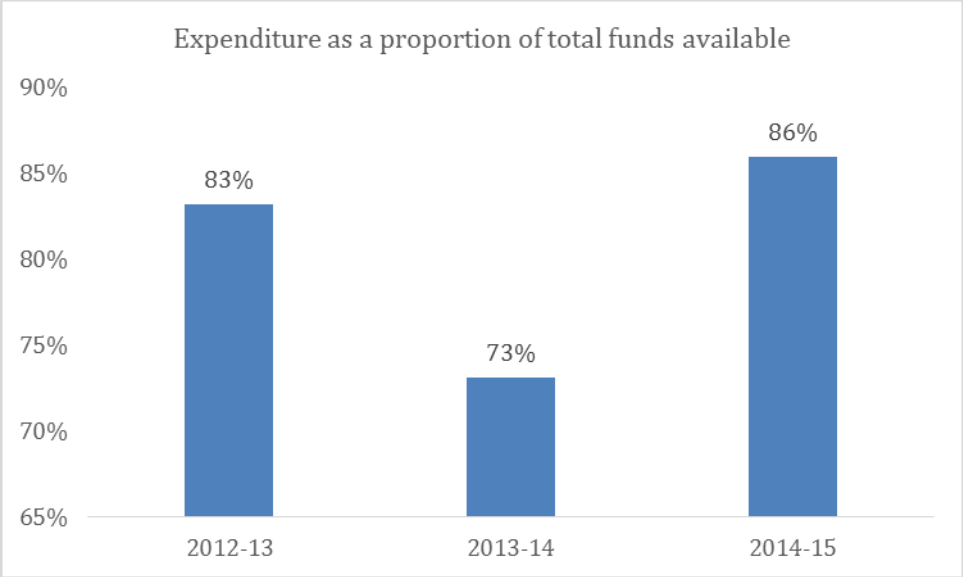
[78] Vacancies are calculated on the basis of norms for numbers of cooks per school, which in turn are decided based on the number of children enrolled.

Figure 4-17: Allocation for MDM, as well as releases, were significantly higher in FY 2013-14 as compared to FY 2014-15



Source: Expenditure statement for the 3 FYs (UCs); Allocation figures from PAB

Figure 4-18: Proportion of funds spent fell in FY2013-14 before rising again in FY2014-15



Source: Expenditure statement for the 3 FYs (UCs). Allocation figures from PAB[79]

4.6.3 Costs incurred while transporting grains

Currently, the SHG is the agency that is responsible for transporting grains from the PDS store to the school as the NAN does not make ay last-mile deliveries. The PAB Minutes 2016-17 note that NAN has raised a

[79] Note: Funds available includes new releases+unspent balances from the previous years

proposal to do so in future and charge transport assistance at Rs. 90 per quintal. In case this is not done, the State plans to provide additional transport assistance to the cooking agency i.e. the SHG.

The amount spent on transporting grain varies significantly across districts, with Surajpur reporting an average of Rs. 32 and Janjgir Champa an average of Rs. 109 per trip (table 4-14). Over half of the SHGs surveyed reported that they received no re-imbursement of this cost.

Table 4-14: Amount spent by SHGs for transporting grains (in Rs. per trip)

	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Per trip, in Rs	45	109	59	32

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey

4.7 MDM Monitoring

The monitoring of the MDM is closely linked with the monitoring of schools in general. Monitoring MDM is part of the roles and responsibilities detailed in the job descriptions of key officials such as the DEO, BEO and cluster and nodal officers. All officials who visit a school to monitor are expected to review the overall functioning of MDM as well and therefore, any laxity in the monitoring of schools will also undermine the effectiveness of MDM monitoring.

The survey found weak monitoring[80] of SSA schools in all 4 districts. On average, 30% of SSA schools had not been visited by a cluster or nodal official even once in FY 2014-15 (see chapter 3). Even when a cluster official had visited a school, an average of 6 months had passed since his/ her last visit.

Monitoring visits by the last-mile points of government are therefore not just few, but far between. Long distances and unavailability of public transport play some role in poor monitoring. The average SSA school in Bastar, for example, is about 6 km away from the nearest bus stop, 23 km from the block office and 38 km from the district headquarters. However, even when the distances are comparatively shorter (as there is for Janjgir Champa when compared to Rajnandgaon), there is little difference between the two districts on parameters of monitoring.

Lack of official monitoring is acknowledged in state documents as well. The AWP&B for 2014-15 notes that while official inspection of the scheme has been done from time to time at all levels, 'it is not possible to tell the figure in percent'. While bi-annual social audits of the scheme have also been suggested, once in April and once in October, we did not hear about them in the course of our fieldwork.

A second important channel to monitor the MDM is a well-functioning School Management Committee. MDM rules provide for the role of SMCs in monitoring of the MDM Scheme. However, as reported in Chapter 3, while most SSA schools had an SMC in place, there was little to demonstrate that these were, in fact, effective or functioning.

[80] A monitoring visit was recorded as such only if it was entered in the monitoring registers in schools.

Finally, teachers can play a role in monitoring of the scheme. A few teachers whom we met in the field complained that the additional responsibility of tasting meals, supervising cooks or looking at grain flows, takes them away from their main duty i.e. of teaching. Some states like Tamil Nadu have resolved this problem by assigning separate staff for MDM. However, in Chhattisgarh, MDM was seen as an additional responsibility, both for teachers at the grassroots level, and for BEOs and DEOs above them.

At the root of the monitoring challenge lies a significant flaw in the way accountability structures are designed for MDM. Take the case of NAN, which is the administrative arm responsible for delivering food grains. It runs parallel to the education department that is responsible for delivering MDM, but has no powers of accountability over food grains administration, except collating data from schools and placing requisition for the next month's food supply. So if schools have problems like grains not arriving on time, all the education department officials can do is take it up with NAN in an inter-departmental meeting.

Even within the administrative structure of the education department, there are no dedicated officers for delivery of MDM. This task is performed by overworked officials in the DEO and BEO offices. Unsurprisingly, monitoring MDM, specifically how SHGs are delivering the scheme in the school, is not their top priority. The grain requisitioning process described in section 4.4.1 is all-consuming and is about all they can do in addition to other departmental tasks assigned to them.

Lack of adequate financial resources adds to the problem. Department officials complain how they do not get transportation allowance to reach schools. Monitoring is thus limited to schools which have the most pressing needs, and perhaps a few more that 'fall on the way'.

In addition to official monitoring, the scheme guidelines also provide for two grievance redress mechanisms – an MDM toll-free, helpline number and a complaint box to ensure that MDM served in schools is hygienic, nutritious, safe and adequate for the school's needs. However, it appears that both these channels were not being used by the schools in our sample to record their complaints. The survey found that a vast majority of the schools surveyed did not even have a complaint box on their premises (table 4-15).

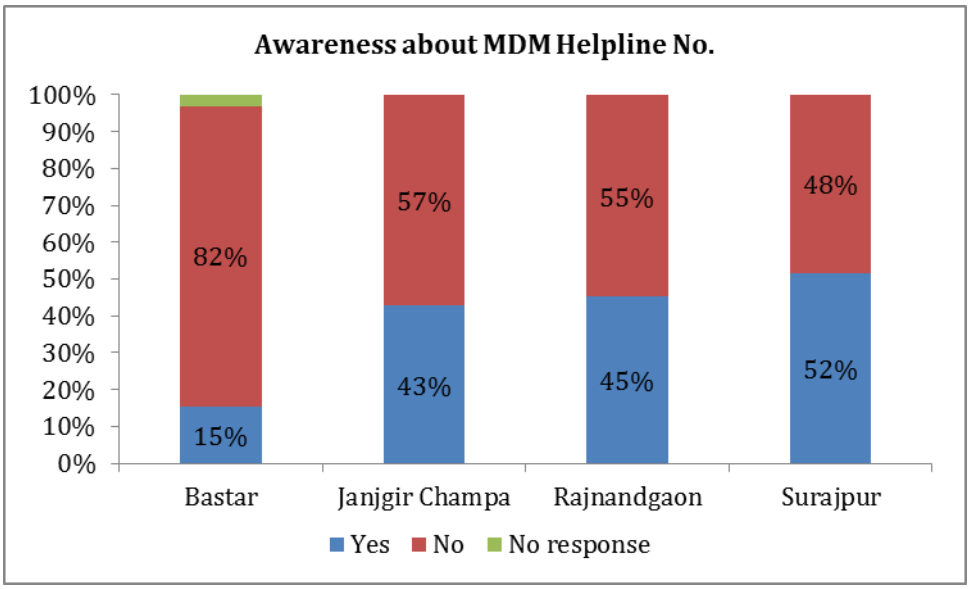
Table 4-15: Majority of schools did not have a complaint box

Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
98%	96%	100%	93%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Further, a large proportion of school Head Masters were not aware of the MDM helpline number, with nearly 80% in Bastar saying they did not know of such a facility. Of those that were aware, most said they had "never used" it.

Figure 4-19: Majority of HMs in Bastar were unaware of the MDM helpline



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey

This awareness was even lower among the SHGs that are engaged with MDM provisioning in schools – 82% in Surajpur and 79% in Janjgir Champa had never heard of the MDM helpline (table 4-16). Official data confirm how limited awareness translates into few complaints: 218 complaints were recorded against the helpline in FY 2014-15 and 210 in FY2013-14 for the entire state (according to the relevant AWP&Bs). Among the complaints received, most revolved around the inadequate provisioning of grain or delays in cooking costs and honorariums. Some were around poor quality of meals, with a few cases of serious food poisoning.

Table 4-16: Poor awareness of the MDM helpline among SHGs, more so in Janjgir Champa and Surajpur

	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Once a week	0%	0%	0%	1%
Once a month	0%	0%	0%	1%
Rarely	2%	1%	0%	3%
Never used	59%	20%	41%	14%
Don't know/Not applicable	39%	79%	59%	82%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey

When official channels failed, schools ended up approaching the offices of the DEO directly with their grievances. It was not surprising therefore to hear a district officer saying that he receives “at least 10 complaints a day” regarding MDM.

4.8 Concluding Reflections

Chhattisgarh has clearly innovated in delivering the MDM within the State. Its efforts to introduce an online system of rice provisioning to reduce the time taken to deliver rice to schools, and decrease pilferage; involving local women in cooking meals; paying them a higher honorarium to increase their incentive to

work; and ensuring that the meals served are of good quality are certainly laudatory. In all the schools we visited, we found teachers tasting the mid-day meal, and students mostly happy with the quality of the meal being served.

However, a few concerns should be noted. First, there appears to be an inflation of the meal 'requirement', which has implications for grain and cooking cost allocation. Second, delays in receiving cooking cost money and CCH honorariums are substantial. These lead to women buying items like vegetables, pulses, oil etc. on credit, a system that is not sustainable and can serve as a major setback to the scheme on the ground. Third, while grain availability does not seem to be a significant issue, there are months in which grain allocation is reduced, particularly May and June. Grain quality is also inconsistent across months. Fourth, there are gaps in the infrastructure that is available for cooking – usable kitchens, space for storage, facility for washing hands, equipment for cooking etc. Fifth, there are district wide variations; the district of Janjgir Champa appears to be performing poorly on most parameters. Given that it is a populous district, with significantly more children enrolled per school, the shortfalls observed warrant attention. Finally, and as we saw in the case of SSA and RMSA, official monitoring is sparse. MDM is seen as an additional responsibility, warranting much vigilance, but with poor resources, both human and financial, being made available for keeping check. Existing mechanisms such as placing a complaint box in each school or providing MDM toll-free helpline numbers do not seem to work – not everyone seems to be aware of them. If Chhattisgarh is to build on its innovative model and truly keep its promise of delivering a high quality, nutritious meal to its children, in time, this is the aspect that needs most strengthening.

5 Integrated Child Development Services

Summary Findings

- Attendance of children between 3-6 years of age enrolled at the anganwadis was found to be low on the day of the survey. It was lowest in Janjgir Champa (39%) and highest in Rajnandgaon (66%). Important reasons behind this are high Anganwadi Worker (AWW) absence (owing to additional duties assigned to them), poor infrastructure at the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) and the emergence of private schools.
- On a positive note, AWWs have high awareness levels about issues such as when to supplement breast milk, frequency at which children need to be weighed etc. Anganwadis in Chhattisgarh also open regularly, and for long hours in the day.
- There are, however, serious deficiencies in infrastructure and equipment availability in AWCs. In particular lack of usable toilets, facility to wash hands, lack of equipment for cooking, essential drugs and material for health monitoring severely constrain the functioning of the AWC. Only 14% of all AWCs in Surajpur, 28% in Bastar and 44% in Rajnandgaon had a usable toilet.
- On average, 3 in every 4 of all AWCs surveyed had received the Flexi Grant in FY 2014-15. This is the only ICDS Anganwadi grant being disbursed by the Women and Child Development (WCD) Department of the State government. However, delays in disbursement of this grant (which comes in two installments of Rs. 500 each) means that anganwadis can do little with it to improve anganwadi infrastructure, spend on essentials etc.
- Large delays are observed in honorarium payments of both the AWW and the Anganwadi Helper (AWH), most significantly in Surajpur and Janjgir Champa. In Surajpur, 76% of all AWWs surveyed reported average delays of 2 months or more in the receipt of their honorariums, and 30% reported delays of 3 months or more[81]. Among the AWHs, 40% in Janjgir Champa and 32% in Surajpur reported delays of 3 months or more in the receipt of their honorarium. These can be attributed to: (1) delays in release of funds out of budgeted allocation; and (2) low spending out of total ICDS allocation.
- The survey found substantial delays in the receipt of money for fuel at the AWC. Over half of all AWHs in Janjgir Champa and Surajpur reported delays of 3 months or more in the receipt of this money.
- On average, 30% of all AWWs surveyed faced shortfall in grains in FY 2014-15. When this happens, the AWWs mostly make up for it through community contribution. However, about 19% of those that face a shortfall, stop serving meals[82], more in Janjgir Champa and Surajpur.
- Majority of AWWs rate the quality of rice as being 'medium' or 'good'; Bastar is an exception, with a greater proportion reporting the quality as being 'good'.
- Poor record keeping was a significant problem faced in the study of ICDS in Chhattisgarh. Cashbooks were available for only 11% and 16% of all SHGs and AWWs surveyed, respectively. Even when cashbooks and passbooks were available, they were rarely updated and the respondent was unable to interpret any of their entries.
- Monitoring of Anganwadis is limited. Except in Bastar, over 10% of all AWCs surveyed were not visited by a Supervisor in the last year. In cases where a supervisor did visit, the average duration since her last visit was 3 to 5 months.
- ICDS implementation faces significant human resource gaps in the State – 19% of all Supervisor positions and 61% of all CDPO positions in Chhattisgarh were vacant as on March 2014.

[81] Enumerators checked last date of salary received from the AWW/AWH passbooks.
[82] 19% of those who faced a shortfall stopped serving meals; this account for 6% of all AWCs surveyed.

5.1 Introduction

Launched on 2nd October 1975, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme is a flagship programme of the Government of India that was initiated to counter hunger and child malnutrition in the country. Broadly, the scheme provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children under 6 years of age, their mothers and adolescent girls. These services are provided from Anganwadi centers (AWCs)[83] established mainly in rural areas and staffed with two frontline workers – an anganwadi worker (AWW) and an anganwadi helper (Sahayika or AWH).

The services offered by AWCs include: immunization of children and their mothers; provision of supplementary nutrition to children and pregnant women and nursing mothers either in the form of hot cooked meals – served to children between the ages of 3 and 6 years – or take home rations; health check-up; referral services; pre-school non-formal education to children between the ages of 3 and 6 years; and nutrition and health information to women and adolescent girls. A typical Anganwadi centre also serves as a small health outpost providing contraceptives, counseling and nutrition education and serves as a depot for basic medicines like oral rehydration salts.

Given the geographical scale of the survey and time limitations, and to allow meaningful depth to the analysis, the current survey focused on delivery of only one of the services offered by the AWC i.e. the serving of hot cooked meals at the AWC under the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP).

The first section of this chapter presents a snapshot of what a typical Anganwadi Centre in our sample villages looked like. This includes the enrollment and attendance of children, the nutrition levels of enrolled children (as per AWC records), and whether the AWC had the physical infrastructure and equipment to perform its expected functions.

5.2 What does a typical AWC in Chhattisgarh look like?

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) suggests a certain layout for anganwadi buildings which includes a separate sitting room for children, separate kitchen, a store for storing food items, child friendly toilets, a space for children's playing (indoor and outdoor activities), with safe drinking water facilities. It also suggests that the covered area of the AWC should not be less than 600 sq feet as per the standard specifications[84]. While there are no standard times for the number of hours that an AWC has to operate, most states keep AWCs open for at least four-five hours in a day.

How did the AWCs visited by the survey fare vis-à-vis these guidelines? Nearly all AWCs were found to be open when visited by the survey team. Attendance registers revealed that across districts, anganwadis were (on average) open for 26 days in month prior to the survey, for 6 hours in a day (from 9/9.30 am to 3/3.30 pm)[85]. The team relied on its own observations to check for all infrastructure-related indicators. As the table below (Table 5-1) shows, there are significant district-level variations in the availability of key infrastructure at the AWC, with Bastar and Surajpur performing poorly on most parameters. Only about

[83] The word anganwadi typically means 'courtyard shelter' in Hindi.

[84] Ministry of Women and Child Development, GO .

[85] This is significantly higher than the number reported by the Rapid Survey on Children (RSOC) conducted by the MWCD in 2013-14; only 63% of AWCs visited in rural Chhattisgarh for RSOC were found to be functioning for 25 or more days in the calendar month prior to survey.

half of the AWCs surveyed in the two districts were found to be running from their own building, a pucca building, or a permanent structure[86]; a little over half had a separate kitchen; and a quarter did not have any provision for drinking water.

An acute problem that emerges at anganwadis across all districts is in terms of two important sanitation-related indicators:

(1) Facility for washing hands: Only about one in every five of all AWCs surveyed (even less for Rajnandgaon) had any provision for washing hands. This is particularly important in a setting where food is routinely cooked and served to children. While not explicitly asked during the survey, no provision for washing hands often may translate into no provision for washing vegetables and utensils and raises questions on the hygiene of the food served at the AWC.
(2) Usable toilet: Only 14% of all AWCs in Surajpur and 28% in Bastar had a usable toilet. Even Rajnandgaon, the district closest to the State capital, had fewer than half of its AWCs equipped with a functioning toilet.

Table 5-1: Poor infrastructure facilities at AWCs in Bastar and Surajpur

Percentage of AWCs with the following facilities:				
	Bastar	**Janjgir Champa**	**Rajnandgaon**	**Surajpur**
AWC open when visited	98%	98%	96%	97%
AWC's run from own building	61%	84%	90%	45%
AWC's that were pucca	61%	88%	89%	50%
Playground	46%	58%	66%	44%
Separate kitchen	53%	78%	76%	52%
Separate storage	57%	72%	74%	47%
Provision for drinking water	74%	88%	75%	74%
Provision for hand washing	24%	21%	11%	19%
Usable toilet	28%	37%	44%	14%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Interestingly, the gaps found in infrastructure facilities are in line with shortfalls observed along some indicators covered by a Rapid Survey on Children (RSOC) conducted by the MWCD in 2013-14. Table 5-2 provides the India average and Chhattisgarh average (for rural areas) for some of the AWC facilities tracked by RSOC. It seems that the RSOC average for AWCs being run from their own building and having a separate kitchen is more in consonance with the averages reported for our tribal districts – Surajpur and Bastar. The non-tribal districts perform better on these indicators. The percentage of AWCs with provision for drinking water is also significantly higher in our sample. The difference between the two surveys could be on account of coverage– the current survey was much larger in scope visiting 240 villages, which were our primary sampling unit (PSU), whereas RSOC covered only 107 PSUs.

Table 5-2: Gaps in AWC infrastructure also reported at the time of RSOC, though much higher

[86] The rest mostly functioned out of rented buildings.

	India (avg)	Chhattisgarh (avg)
AWC's run from own building	43%	45%
Separate kitchen	53%	59%
Provision for drinking water	43%	15%
Usable toilet*	42%	35%

Source: RSOC, 2013-14, MWCD, GoI[87]

Overall though, it is evident that AWCs in the sample still lack some basic infrastructure facilities, and in tribal districts, they are not even run from their own buildings. There is a move to fill these gaps by constructing AWCs, particularly in the most backward blocks of the state, with the help of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The move follows a Government notification issued in 2012 for convergence of the ICDS, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the MGNREGS, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, allowing construction of AWCs under the rural job scheme. The MWCD is identifying locations for these AWCs under the World Bank assisted restructured System Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project (ISSNIP). In our meetings with the State government, officials confirmed that much of the infrastructure issues will be addressed through a convergence of funds and activities under MGNREGS[88].

In addition to physical infrastructure, lack of cooking related material and equipment, and equipment for health monitoring (weighing machine, growth charts etc.) also emerges as a concern. AWCs are envisaged as village-level centers for recording and monitoring of child and maternal health indicators. For many important child and maternal health programmes (immunization, delivery of IFA tablets to pregnant women and so on), AWCs are not only the last point of both service delivery, but they are also the most deeply entrenched in communities to gather reliable data and impart critical knowledge on issues of health, hygiene and nutrition[89]. In such a scenario therefore, it is important that they should be outfitted with all the essential equipment.

While availability of weighing machines does not appear to be a significant issue, any material that is related to knowledge on health issues (child growth charts, immunization posters, maternal health posters etc.) was found to be in short supply in the AWCs visited by the survey[90]. Less than a quarter of all AWCs surveyed were stocked with any essential drugs.

[87] Notes: * RSOC only tracks whether the AWC has a toilet, not its usability.

[88] The WCD reports (http://icds-wcd.nic.in/icds/icds.aspx) that States have been requested to tap funds from various rural infrastructure creation schemes (e.g. MGNREGA, MPLADS, BRGF etc.) for the construction and upgradation of AWC buildings. The construction of AWC buildings has also been included in the list of permissible works under Schedule-I in MGNREGA.

[89] In an interview to one of the team members, a senior official working on the scheme pointed how the ICDS is the only social sector scheme that provides last mile workers; even the auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) who is responsible for servicing the village for its health requirements through a primary health centre (PHC) or sub-centre, is often not a resident of the village. The AWW and AWH therefore are always drawn into delivery of other programs as well, stationed as they are within a village. We return to the issue of how this 'additional work' impedes the delivery of ICDS services.

[90] Again, our survey suggests a higher percentage of AWCs with weighing machines than RSOC; but a lower proportion of AWCs with child growth charts.

Most worryingly and directly linked to the focus of this survey, 20-30% of all AWCs surveyed did not have essential cooking utensils and/ or a stove on the premises. This of course impacts the anganwadi's delivery of hot cooked meals to children on an ongoing basis. Among the four districts covered by the survey, Janjgir Champa ranked the lowest on provision of cooking utensils and essential drugs (see Table 5-3).

Table 5-3: Low provision of essential drugs, posters and toys at AWCs

	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Weighing machine (adult)	83%	75%	77%	80%
Weighing machine (children)	86%	94%	95%	87%
Child growth charts/ booklets	69%	69%	79%	70%
Immunization posters/ booklets	48%	44%	40%	42%
Maternal health posters/ booklets	47%	41%	36%	35%
Child health posters/ booklets	53%	47%	42%	42%
Toys and play equipment	78%	59%	59%	66%
Early learning kit (books, puzzles etc.)	72%	78%	83%	72%
Cooking utensils and stove	85%	71%	83%	87%
Essential drugs	22%	15%	17%	21%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

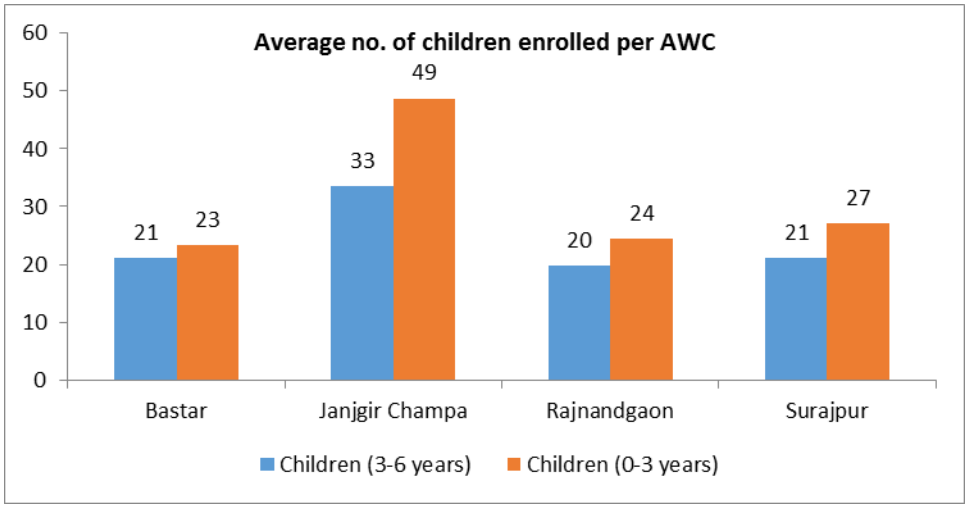
5.3 Outcomes: children's enrollment, attendance and nutrition

5.3.1 Children's Enrollment and Attendance

The average number of anganwadis in our sampled villages varied from district to district, with Surajpur recording on average 6 AWCs, Bastar (5), Janjgir Champa (3), and Rajnandgaon (2) per village. The provision of AWCs in the village is mostly dictated by population norms. The guidelines for tribal areas are relatively more relaxed, with 1 AWC recommended to service a population between 300-800 (where as the norm for non-tribal areas is 400-800). It was not surprising therefore to find more AWCs in Bastar and Surajpur. In the non-tribal districts, Jangir Champa has a higher population than Rajnandgaon, which explains more centers per village in the former than in Rajnandgaon.

All children between 0-6 years of age in a village must mandatorily be enrolled at an AWC. Figure 5-1 shows the average enrolment of children in AWCs by district, disaggregated by children below 3 years of age, and those between 3-6 years of age.

Figure 5-1: Highest enrollment of children in AWCs in Janjgir Champa



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

We did some back of the envelope calculations to check if these enrolment numbers were broadly in line with child populations at the time of the Census in 2011. First, child population (0-6 years) was taken for the three districts for which data was available in the Census: Bastar, Janjgir Champa and Rajnandgaon. Second, using the rural-urban population distribution within the district as a proxy, we extrapolated the proportion of children below 6, living in rural areas in these three districts. Third, we divided these children, roughly, across the number of villages and the number of AWCs per village (Table 5-4). Of course, these calculations rest on the assumption that the child population would have remained more or less the same after 2011, within the districts, with new births compensating for children growing older. On average, it seems that the number of children enrolled in AWCs is slightly lower than what is suggested by the Census. But the highest number of children per AWC, as per these calculations, should be in Janjgir Champa from among our districts, and that is indeed the case (figure 5-1).

***Table 5-4:** Number of children who should be in AWCs as per Census, 2011*

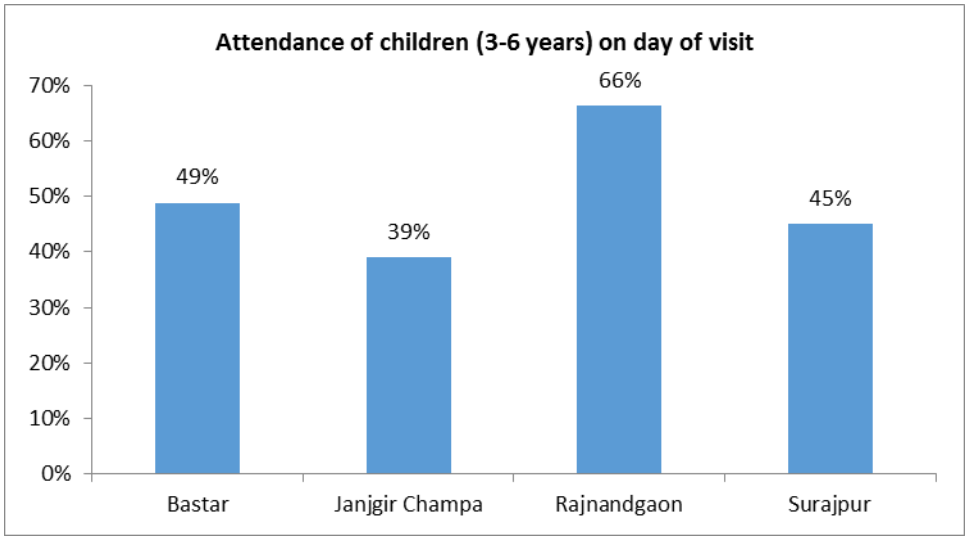
	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon
Children (0-6 years) in 2011	216713	224218	209575
% of Urban population	14%	14%	18%
% of Rural population	86%	86%	82%
Children (0-6 years), in rural areas in 2011	187045	193052	172417
No. of rural villages (2011)	1150	892	1653
No. of children per village (2011)	163	216	104
No. of AWCs per village (survey)	5	3	2
No. of children per AWC	33	72	52

Source: Census of India, 2011; Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

What about attendance? Do all enrolled children go to the AWCs? We measured attendance in an unannounced visit made to every anganwadi in our sample and found low attendance of children between 3-6 years of age (as a percentage of those enrolled). An anganwadi is designed to function like a day care centre for children in this age group, providing not just a hot cooked meal, but also early childhood education through non-formal pre-school activities using toys and games. However, the survey found that

not all enrolled children (between 3 and 6 years of age) were present in the AWC at the time of the visit. Attendance was lowest in Janjgir Champa (39%) and highest in Rajnandgaon (66%) (figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2: AWCs across the sample reported low attendance of children, with Janjgir Champa performing the worst at 39%



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

The ICDS Supervisors interviewed for the study revealed that such absenteeism was a persisting problem.

> *"If there are 15 children registered at an AWC, then I only find 6-8 when I go for monitoring. I tell the Anganwadi Worker that she must increase this attendance by at least 2 children next month, and then I go back to monitor."*
>
> - A Supervisor

Based on data from field interviews with functionaries and a few parents[91], the following factors were seen as contributing to low attendance of children at the AWC:

1. Distant AWCs; poor infrastructure and facilities; irregular timings: The Panchayat is the body that constructs an AWC in a village. Our survey, however, found instances of Panchayats constructing the anganwadi far away from the village centre, and not on the allocated land[92]. When AWCs were built in inconvenient locations, it had direct implications for children's attendance. At times, parents expected the AWW or helper to pick up their children or drop them home. Challenged on account of time, many workers found this difficult, and said it was a primary reason for not getting children to come to their centers. They also rued how parents pulled out their children, seeing the center in a decrepit condition, with few facilities, poor maintenance, and no access to toilets or drinking water. Yet another refrain which we heard in villages but could not confirm because we didn't do repeat visits was the irregular time kept by anganwadis. A few community members complained how the AWC catering to their hamlet/village did not always open on time. As many of them were farm workers who had to leave

[91] While we did not conduct extensive interviews with villagers, we spoke informally with a few that we met in the course of our fieldwork.

[92] AWCs are to be constructed on government land. The site for construction should be selected by the CDPO in association with a local land authority or government official, based on its appropriateness with regard to parameters such as location, accessibility and safety for use by children.

their children at the centre to work, they ended up leaving them instead at their house or taking them to the fields.

2. Worker absenteeism: While the overall AWW vacancy rates appear to be low in the State (3%)[93], AWWs were not able to dedicate their entire time to the AWC whist it was open, managing a range of tasks that were assigned to them. As the only "barefoot soldiers" for State administration in a village, AWWs reported how they were routinely given tasks outside of the remit of their work at the AWC. In the experience of the enumerators doing the survey, AWWs were often found missing from the centers to do work for the health department, the Aadhar card, BLOs and Mission Indradhanush[94]. When the AWW is away for such tasks, the AWCs usually close down. An Anganwadi Helper is able to only feed the children and finds it difficult to manage and engage them productively any further. She is often unable to cope with the extra work, children are neglected and those that show up are sent home early. Many AWWs also reside in far off villages and this impacts their ability to stay for the entire duration that the AWC is open. Parents, realizing these constraints, are thus reluctant to send their children to AWCs on a regular basis.

   A Supervisor interviewed by the survey team reported that unauthorized, repeated absenteeism by both the AWW and AWH is viewed seriously. The Supervisor informs her senior i.e. the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) who then penalises the AWWs through wage cuts. A report of all her monitoring visits is submitted by the Supervisor to the CDPO on a monthly basis. However, monitoring data (discussed later) shows that actual monitoring by Supervisors is low and this undermines systems that may have been put in place to ensure high worker attendance.

3. Emergence of private schools: A final factor seen as contributing to low children's attendance at the AWCs is the emergence of a number of private schools in villages. According to the ASER Centre, 17% of students in Chhattisgarh were enrolled in private schools in 2014[95]. AWWs spoke about how parents do not view them as education providers and feel instead that their wards would learn much more in private nurseries. Many parents thus prefer sending their children to such private outfits[96].

In sum it can be argued that parents find little merit in sending their children to an anganwadi centre except so they receive a hot cooked meal. In the 2-3 days that our field team was in a village and observed the anganwadis, the general observation was that children show up for meals and leave, or show up on the days when they receive take-home rations (THR). Some of the reasons for poor attendance can be addressed with direct intervention. Ensuring that AWCs open on time and are located conveniently, that the AWW and AWH show up regularly, that the AWC is well maintained and clean, that it is equipped with

[93] ICDS data tables, state-wise details of projects, AWCs, beneficiaries, vacancy positions, and nutrition status of children as on March 2014. Available online ICDS Data Tables, MoWCD.
[94] A GOI immunization programme.
[95] Data Query, ASER data for school enrolment - 2014, ASER Centre (http://www.asercentre.org/education/data/india/statistics/level/p/66.html). Last accessed on November 11, 2015.
[96] A recent National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) report shows that a majority of students studying in private schools do so to make sure that they get better quality education. Among parents who prefer to send their children to private schools at the primary level (in rural areas), about 59% do so for 'better environment of learning'; 22% say that the quality of education provided by the government is not satisfactory; and 12% want their children to study in a school where English is the medium of instruction. The survey was conducted between January and June 2014. For more details, see http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/bqL7u6IjwkqU0BDA0Gy4oK/Yes-to-a-government-college-but-no-to-government-schools.html

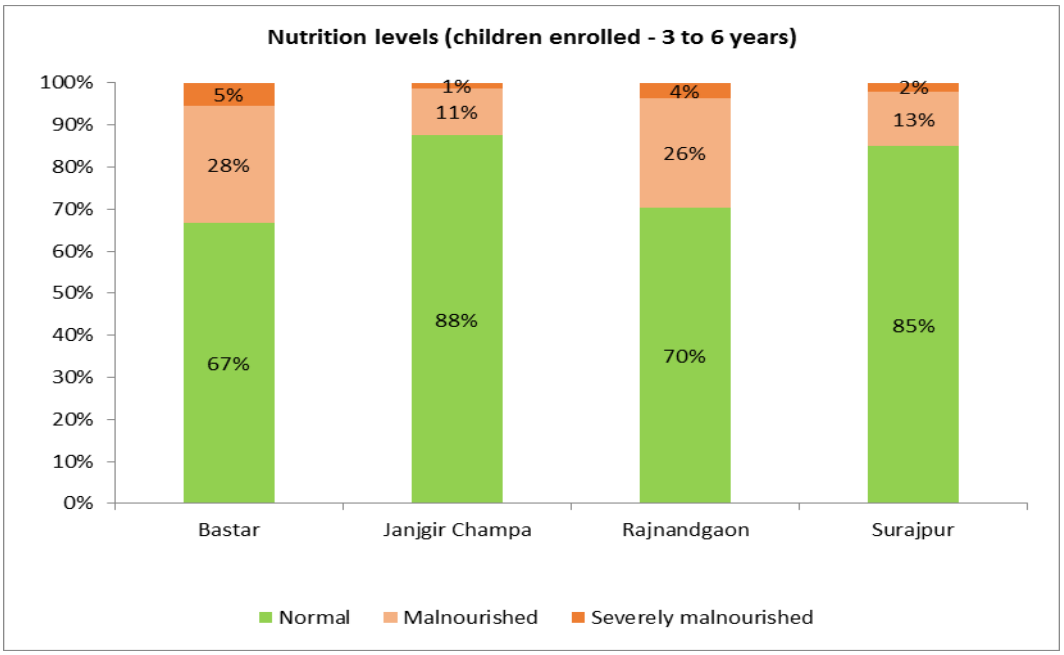
proper infrastructure (drinking water, toilets, playing-learning material etc.) are some of the steps that can go a long way towards improving children's attendance at the AWC.

5.3.2 Children's Nutrition

The Rapid Survey on Children (2013-14) by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (GoI) reports that of the 0-59 months old children surveyed in rural Chhattisgarh, 31.6% were underweight (weight for age below -2SD) and 10.6% were severely underweight (weight for age below -3SD). Thus, on average, nearly half of children between the ages of 0 and 5 years were below the "normal" weight.

However AWC records which were entered and analyzed by our survey show that only 21% of all children between 3-6 years of age and 22% of all children between 0-3 years of age are underweight or severely underweight, with some district level variations (see figures 5-3 and 5-4). When compared with the RSOC survey numbers (which rely on actual monitoring of children), the records reveal significant improvements. But skeptics may suggest that improvements of this scale are not possible within 1-2 years (between 2013-14 when RSOC was conducted and 2015, when our survey was in the field). There may be multiple reasons for the difference. For instance a recent evaluation of anganwadis carried out by the Niti Aayog across 19 states and UTs suggests that for the children enrolled in the 530 AWCs visited, health records for about one in four were "misclassified/missing for which AWCs workers and supervisors had no satisfactory answers". In some states (Punjab and Uttar Pradesh), verification of weight records with actual weighing revealed that "all the information maintained (was) either misclassified or not maintained" (Niti Aayog, 2015: page 12)[97].

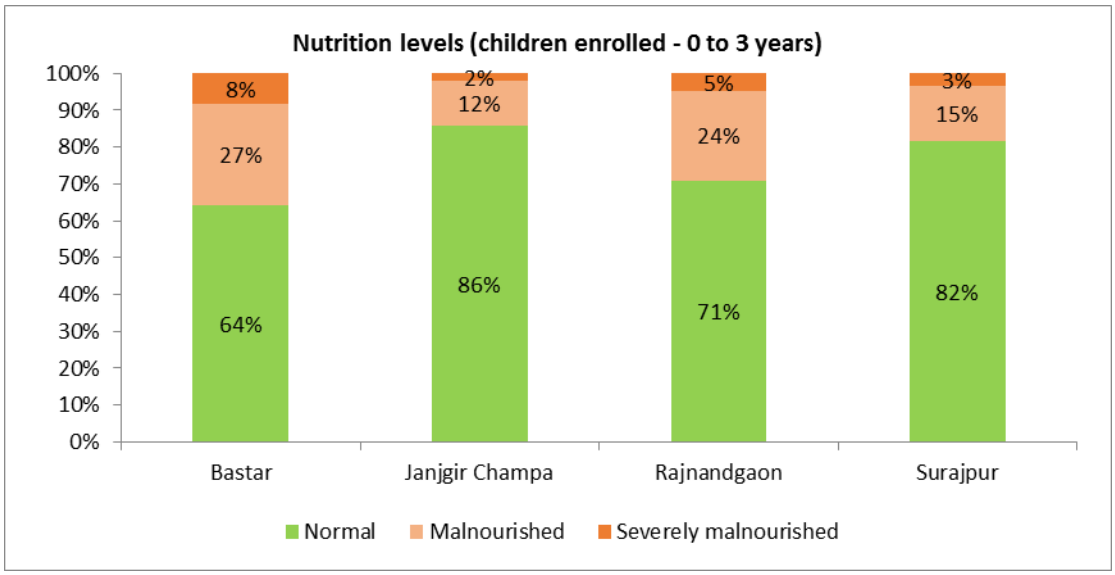
Figure 5-3: In the 3-6 year age group, Janjgir Champa and Surajpur show good nutrition levels; Bastar and Rajnandgaon lag behind



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[97] A Quick Evaluation Study of Anganwadis, Niti Aayog. Chhattisgarh was not covered by the evaluation study.

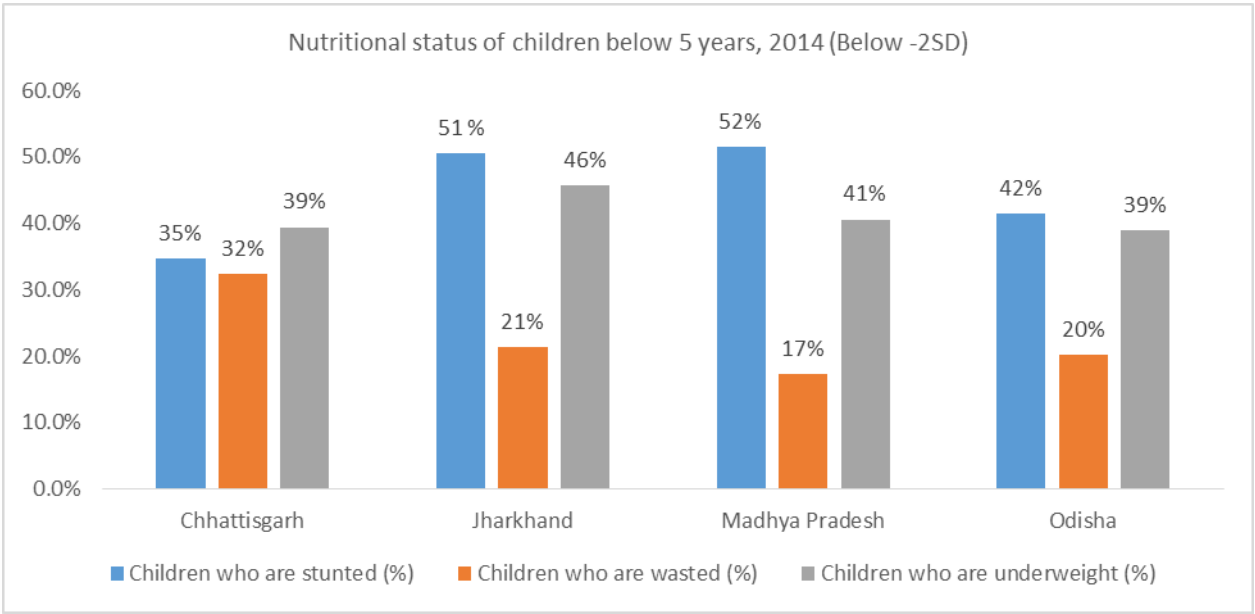
Figure 5-4: The 0-3 year age group follows a similar pattern, with Janjgir Champa performing the best and Bastar the poorest



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

The Annual Health Survey (AHS) 2014 data also show that nearly 40% of 0-5 year old children in Chhattisgarh were underweight (figure 5-5). Thus while none of the official figures are directly comparable to those provided by the AWCs (different age brackets, different years), the overall trend suggests that AWC records are an overestimation of nutrition levels among children and must be reviewed carefully.

Figure 5-5: The Annual Health Survey of 2014 suggests that nearly two in every five children in Chhattisgarh are underweight



Source: Clinical, Anthropometric and Biochemical (CAB) 2014, Annual Health Survey, Government of India (http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/hh-series/cab.html). Last accessed on November 12, 2015[98]

[98] Note: Data for Andhra Pradesh was not available.

Poor record keeping hampers a critical aspect of the ICDS which is to raise the health and nutritional level of poor Indian children below 6 years of age. Scheme norms stipulate that each child must be fed according to their levels of malnourishment. These norms, circulated in a letter by the GoCG, require that children (3-6 years) be provided food as per the following guidelines (see Table 5-5)[99]. The norms are in conformity with those promised by the GoI in 2012 – Rs. 4 per beneficiary per day for normal children, and Rs. 6 for severely malnourished children[100].

Table 5-5: SNP Norms for Children 3-6 years of age, Chhattisgarh, 2012

Category	Grain (in gm)	Protein (gm)	Calories (k cal)	Cost norms (in Rs. per beneficiary per day)
Normal children (3-6 years)				
Ready to eat	55	6.16	326.49	1.56
Hot cooked meals	105	8.25	326.45	2.43
Total	**160**	**14.41**	**652.94**	**3.99**
Severely malnourished children (3-6 years)				
Ready to eat	55	6.16	326.49	1.56
Hot cooked meals	105	8.25	326.45	2.43
Special ready to eat for malnourished children	70	7.84	266.60	1.99
Total	**230**	**22.25**	**919.54**	**5.98**

Source: Chhattisgarh APIP 2012-13, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Chhattisgarh.

However, the survey found that this was rarely done in practice – each child was fed a near-equal lump-sum approximation of grain (and other food), with little emphasis paid to who needed what. The AWW registers rarely showed differences by category of children (normal, malnourished). In interviews to the surveyors, AWWs themselves confirmed that this was the case, and said they only calculated each child's meal "*andaaz se*" (by approximation) and "did not have the time" to make proper estimations for everyone.

5.4 Challenges in ICDS implementation

The previous section suggests that outcomes of the ICDS are not completely in line with what the scheme purports to achieve. Poor attendance of children is clearly an issue, and although malnutrition levels are low according to AWC records, other studies cast doubt on whether they are indeed as low as suggested. In

[99] Revised financial norms, MoWCD

[100] The norms have been revised subsequently to Rs. 6 for normal children and Rs. 9 for severely malnourished children. The revised rates follow the roll out of restructured ICDS in a phased manner i.e. 200 high burden districts in 2012-13, 200 districts in 2013-14 and remaining districts in 2014-15

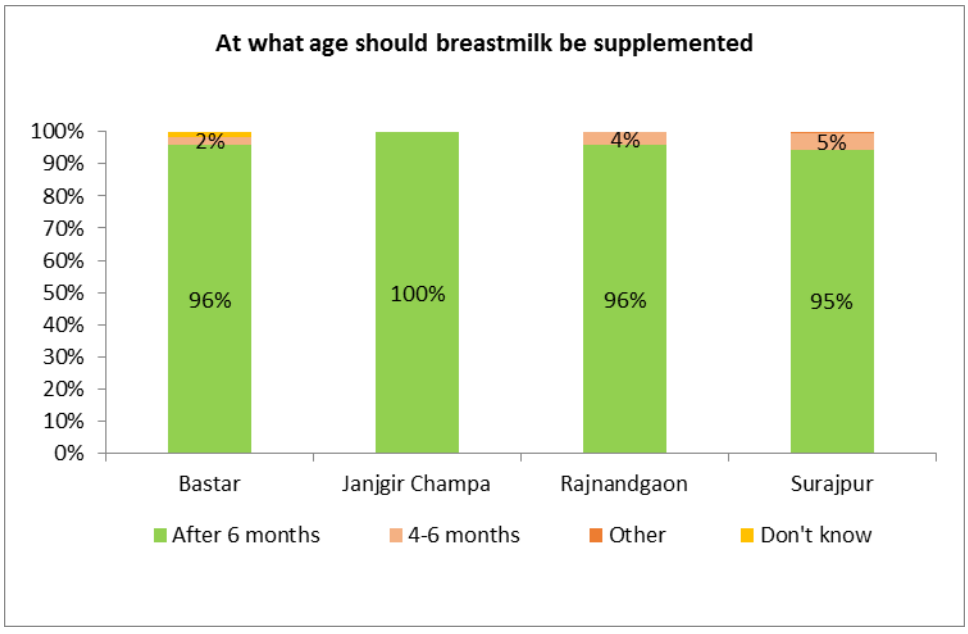
this section, we assess factors that may be constraining anganwadi workers from delivering the scheme according to its objectives.

5.4.1 Human Resource: AWW awareness, workload and honorarium delays

Awareness of AWWs: An important function performed by AWWs is to provide health and nutrition education and counseling to women in the community. Since they are close to (and often belong to) the local community, AWWs are well placed to integrate themselves with local women and motivate them to adopt healthy practices with regard to family planning, child health and nutrition. It is thus essential that their own awareness on these issues is high, with clarity on some universally agreed best practices.

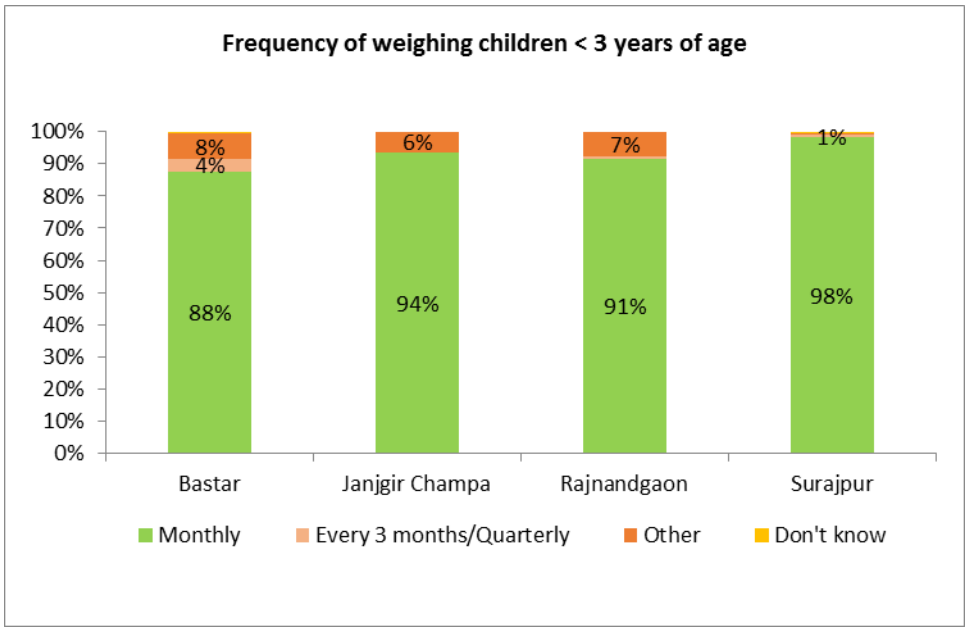
All AWWs surveyed were asked a series of questions by the interviewers to gauge their knowledge and understanding of some important aspects of child health and nutrition. The survey found a high degree of awareness and knowledge among AWWs on matters like the right age to supplement breastmilk, the frequency with which children below 3 years and those above 3 years are to be weighed, and whether water can be given to infants upto 6 months of age, with only some small pockets of concern (see figures 5-6 to 5-9). Overall, data suggest that AWWs in Bastar and Janjgir Champa may need more enhanced training on some of these issues.

Figure 5-6: AWW awareness on the right time to supplement breast milk is uniformly high



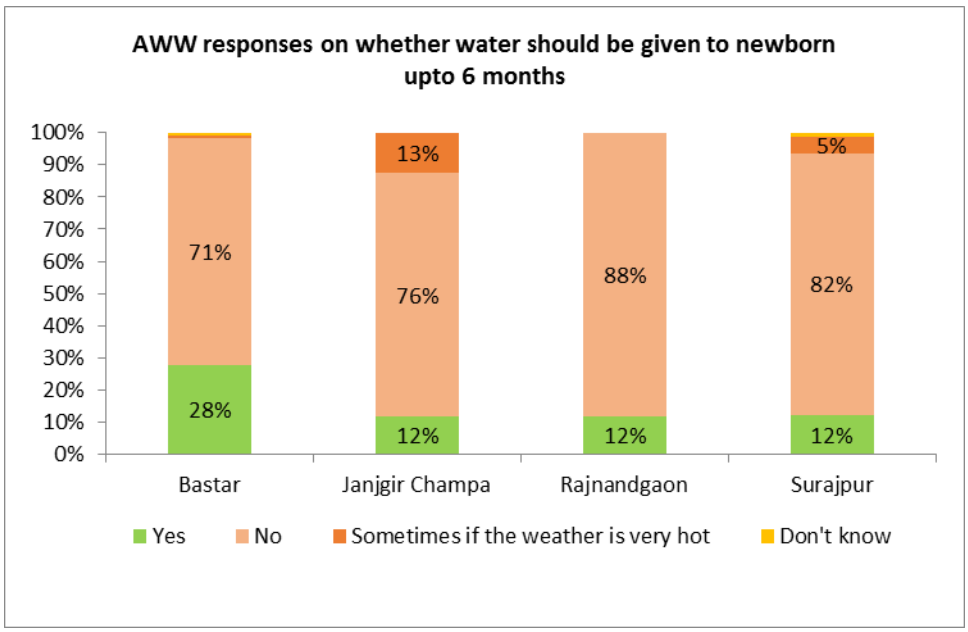
Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Figure 5-7: Knowledge that children less than 3 years need to be weighed monthly is high (except in Bastar)



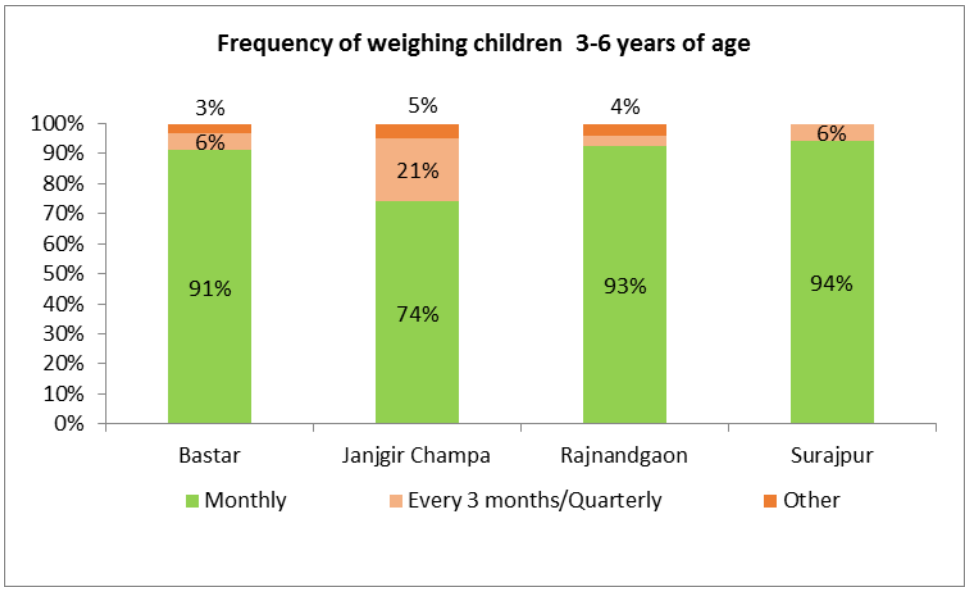
Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Figure 5-8: Relatively low awareness on providing water to infants upto the age of 6 months; lowest in Bastar



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Figure 5-9: Knowledge that children (3-6 years) need to be weighed monthly is low in Janjgir Champa



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Our numbers also augur well with those reported by surveys like RSOC which found high awareness of AWWs viz. exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, both at an all-India level and in rural Chhattisgarh. In sum, awareness of AWWs does not appear to be a significant constraint to delivering services promised by the ICDS in Chhattisgarh, except in some pockets.

AWW and AWH workload: The AWW has a number of duties which she has to discharge. These include, for instance:

- providing supplementary nutrition to children (through ready to eat/ take home rations and hot cooked meals) and pregnant and lactating mothers (through take home rations);
- coordinating health check-ups for pregnant women (including ANC, PNC, immunization etc), monitoring nutrition outcomes for children (through measurement of weight, height etc.) and organizing referral, if needed;
- working with health professionals to educate women and adolescent girls on critical health issues;
- motivating families to adopt family planning and educating them about child growth and development;
- maintaining birth records in the village;
- organizing health camps e.g. village health and nutrition days; and
- delivering pre-school education using means such as games, learning material (e.g. alphabet and number charts), stories, poems and so on.

The AWH or the Sahayika, on the other hand, is primarily responsible for cooking food, storing and maintaining grains, serving meals to children, cleaning the AWC, and helping the AWW as needed.

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, however, AWWs and Sahayikas are drawn into delivery of social welfare programs such as the Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) to educate teenage girls, immunization drives, and as suggested above, other state work e.g. the Census and BPL surveys, enrollment for Aadhar, and so on. Additionally, and to monitor delivery of ICDS and all services promised by it, they have to maintain a series of registers, including for example an anganwadi survey register (which gives birth

information and weight and height measurement of children), a daily attendance register, a supplementary nutrition register, a pre-school education register, a register for immunization, a register to monitor services for pregnant and lactating mothers, to name a few. For many of these activities, the AWW has to step out of the AWC, resulting thereby in noticeable absence, even though she is out for official work. AWWs complain about lack of time to devote to tasks for which they are responsible for, especially PSE.

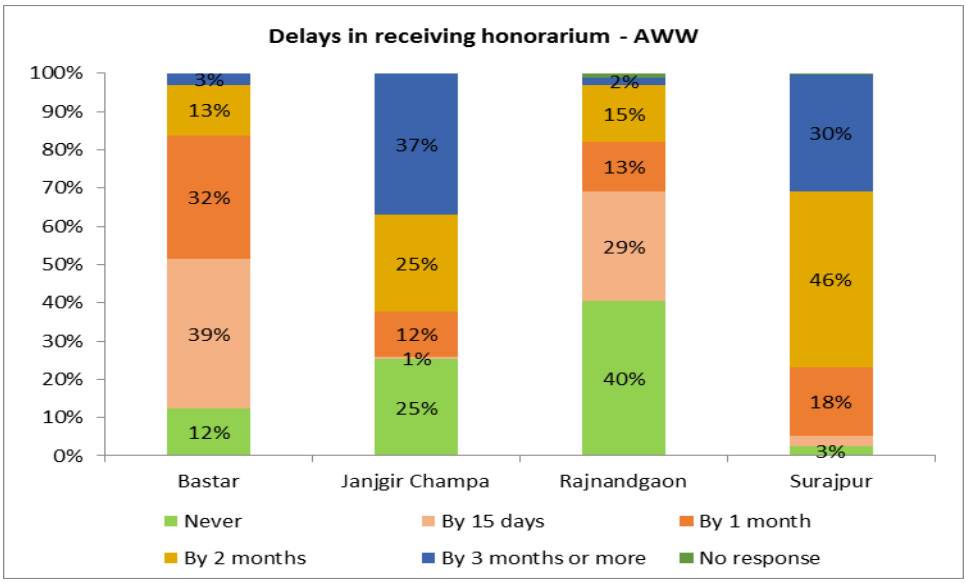
> *"Kagzi karyawahi me sara time chala jata hai, jise karan Kendra ke mukhya kam me dhyan nahi de pate."*
>
> *– An Aanganwadi Worker*

Payment of Honorariums: Finally, we assessed whether worker honorariums reach on time, and if not, do they serve as an obstacle in AWW/AWH work. We asked all AWWs we interviewed whether or not they faced any constraint in their work; 71% responded yes. Among the obstacles that they listed, the most common one cited was that of salary delays (about 4 in every 5 AWWs interviewed who spoke of facing problems, identified salary delays as an issue).

The AWW and AWH in Chhattisgarh are paid a monthly honorarium for their work that is directly credited to their bank accounts by the district. The honorariums differ depending on the qualifications of the AWW and AWH. Overall, the AWW and AWH honorariums account for 67% of all spending under ICDS in Chhattisgarh (not including spending on SNP)[101].

The survey found substantial delays in the receipt of this honorarium for both the AWW and the AWH – these are graphically represented in the charts below (see figures 5-10 and 5-11)[102]. These delays were particularly large in Surajpur, followed by Janjgir Champa. In Surajpur, 76% of all AWWs surveyed reported average delays of 2 months or more in the receipt of their honorariums, and 30% reported delays of 3 months or more[103].

Figure 5-10: Large delays in receipt of AWW honorarium, especially in Surajpur and Janjgir Champa



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

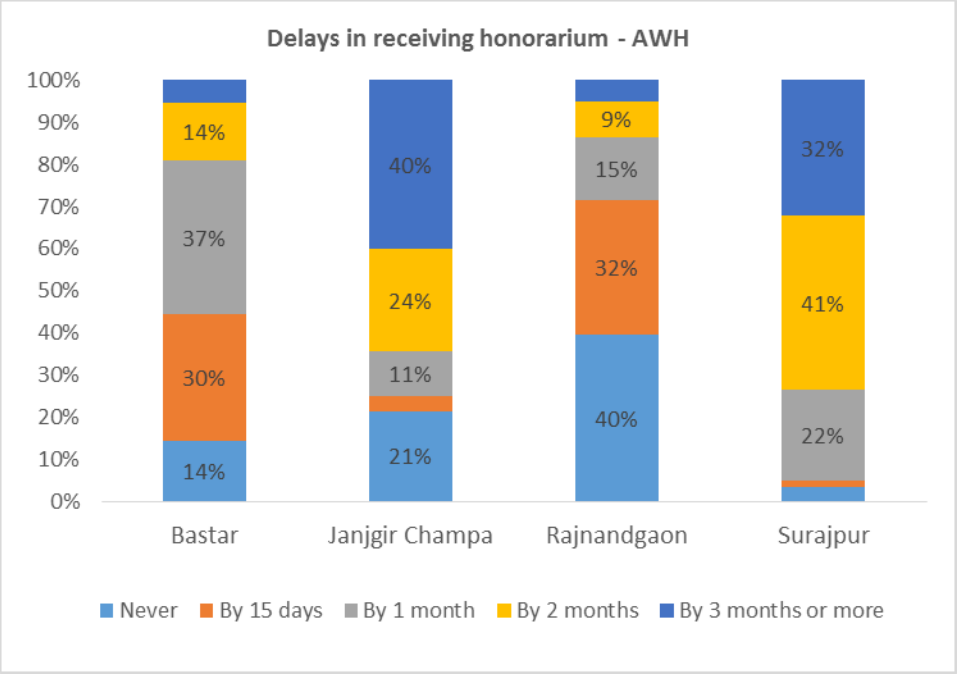
[101] Source: WCD Office, GoC.

[102] While AWW and AWH honorariums arrive with substantial delays, survey data shows very high coverage for delivery of AWW/AWH sarees. Nearly all AWWs and AWHs across the 4 districts had received sarees in both FY 2013-14 and FY 2014-15.

[103] Enumerators checked last date of salary received from the AWW/AWH passbooks.

A similar pattern was found in the receipt of the honorariums for the AWHs as well: 40% in Janjgir Champa and 32% in Surajpur reported delays of 3 months or more in the receipt of their honorarium. Once again, Rajnandgaon performed relatively better, but still only 40% of all AWHs reported that they received their honorariums on time.

***Figure 5-11**: Similar patterns of delays for the honorariums of AWHs*

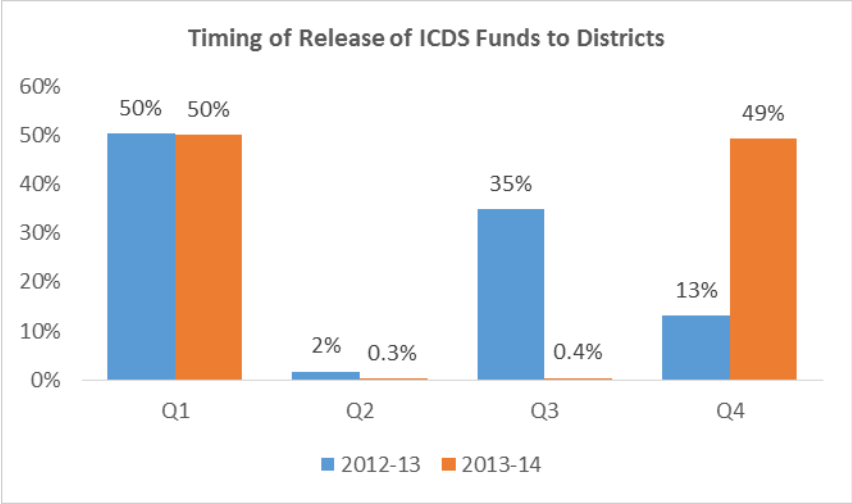


Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Delays in honorariums may be explained by: (1) delays in release of funds out of budgeted allocation; and/or (2) low spending out of total ICDS allocation.

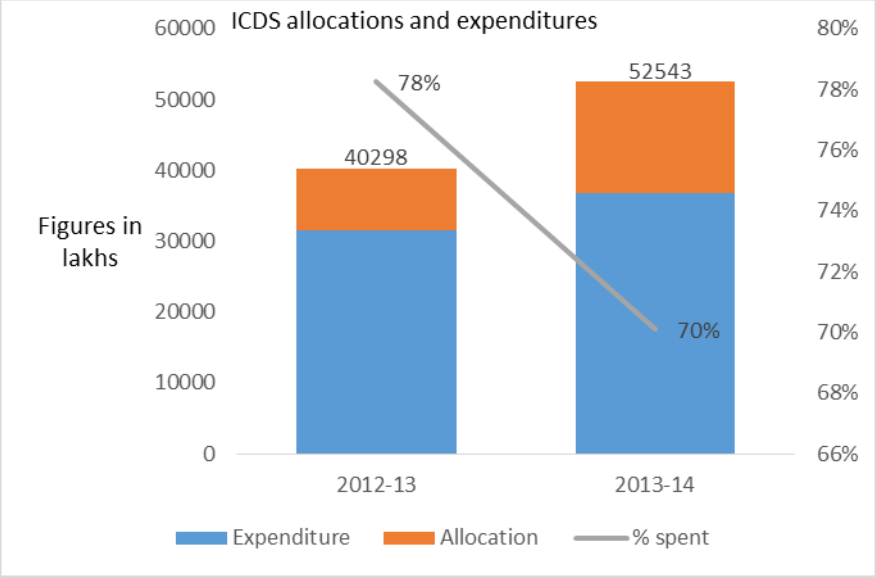
Detailed budget data on ICDS allocation, release and spending for FY 2014-15 and FY 2015-16 were not shared with the study team; hence it is difficult to conjecture whether they had an impact on honorarium delays seen in the field. However, data from the previous year (FY 2013-14) suggests considerable delays in fund release for ICDS. For example, in FY 2013-14, only 79% of ICDS allocation was released (down from 91% in 2012-13). Of the amount that was released, half of all ICDS funds were released to the districts only in the last quarter of the financial year (figure 5-12). This consequently had implications for district-level spending - only 70% of the ICDS allocations were spent (figure 5-13). Whether or not these delays sustained in FY 2014-15 and FY 2015-16 is difficult to establish without data.

***Figure 5-12**: Half of ICDS funds were released to districts in quarter 4 in 2013-14*



Source: WCD Office, GoC

***Figure 5-13**: Only 70% of ICDS funds were spent in 2013-14*



Source: WCD Office, GoC; Note: Expenditure is calculated out of allocations

While the reasons for delays and gaps at the State level are not clear, qualitative data gives us some insight into what may be the factors accounting for delays at the lower levels.

All AWWs must submit their attendance registers at the CDPO's office (through the Supervisor) before their honorariums can be released. However, owing to poor training, many of them struggle to do this on a regular basis. While there is no quantitative survey data on it, delays in salaries of Supervisors were also reported on the ground perhaps serving as a disincentive for them to monitor attendance registers.

At the district, a total amount for honorariums is computed and sent to the State – based on which the State makes its allocations. When allocations form the State do not arrive on time, the District Magistrate has the authority to sanction 3 months of salaries from the district's own funds. A District Project Officer (DPO) shared that in addition to the State not releasing funds in time; sometimes the districts also fail to submit their demands in time. When timelines are tight and resources are scare, they may even share the previous year's budget – just to meet the deadline.

DPOs and CDPOs largely expressed helplessness in dealing with these delays.

> *"I personally can't do much if there is a delay in this regard. We wait…"*
>
> *"What can we do! We request them to be patient!"*
>
> - State and Project-level WCD officers

5.4.2 Challenges in delivering Hot Cooked Meals: Grain flow, money for fuel and cooking costs

Flow of grains to the AWC: The majority of AWCs reported that hot cooked meals were served at the AWC for all 5 working days before the day of the survey. However, 6% of all AWCs in Janjgir Champa and 5% in Bastar reported not serving meals for *any* of these days (Table 5-6).

Table 5-6: Majority of AWCs reported serving Hot Cooked Meals for all five days before the day of the survey

Number of days when children (3-6) were served HCM at AWC (in last 5 days)				
	Bastar	**Janjgir Champa**	**Rajnandgaon**	**Surajpur**
Zero	5%	6%	0%	2%
One	0%	0%	0%	0%
Two	1%	1%	0%	0%
Three	2%	2%	0%	2%
Four	11%	17%	15%	12%
Five	80%	75%	85%	84%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

The AWCs who could not serve hot cooked meals all five days of the week attributed their inability to do so to shortfall in grains. According to the AWWs at these centers, shortfalls could occur because of multiple reasons including for instance, the AWC not receiving grain coupons in time (59%)[104], the village not receiving enough grain supply from above (51%), the grain lifted not being as per the entitlement mentioned on the coupon (5%), and high demand of PDS rice among villagers and norms being insufficient for children (3% each)[105]. May, June and April were identified as the most problematic months (in that

[104] A major reason for gaps in provisioning of hot cooked meals is delays in receiving "coupons" for the rice. Based on an AWC's enrollment (and hence consumption), an AWC is issued coupons on a monthly basis that allow it to collect its monthly rice allocation from the Public Distribution System (PDS) store in the village. These coupons are used by the concerned SHG that lifts the rice from the PDS and deposits it at the AWC.

[105] Multiple reasons were cited. Thus, responses do not add up to 100%.

order) for delay in coupons. A potential reason for such delay may be that fewer children show up at the AWC in summer months, causing delay on part of the administration.

Interestingly, responses to shortfall in grains differ from district to district. On the whole, AWCs that report facing a shortfall mostly make up for it through community contribution (32%) and other measures (21%), with AWCs in Rajnandgaon resorting to community contribution the most (59%). However, worryingly about 19% stop serving meals[106], more in Janjgir Champa and Surajpur (Table 5-7).

Table 5-7: One in every five AWCs facing a shortfall in grains stopped serving meals

		As % of those who reported facing shortfall			
	AWWs that reported facing shortfall in grains in FY 2014-15	**Community contribution**	**Panchayat contribution**	**Lodge complaint**	**Stop Serving meals in cases of Shortfall**
Bastar	31%	24%	5%	18%	19%
Janjgir Champa	28%	39%	3%	21%	24%
Rajnandgaon	35%	59%	0%	16%	0
Surajpur	23%	21%	23%	8%	25%
Total (weighted average)	**28%**	**32%**	**10%**	**15%**	**19%**

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

In terms of the quality of the rice made available, the majority of both SHGs and AWWs interviewed perceived it to be of a "medium" to "good" quality. Among both SHGs and AWWs, a significantly larger proportion of respondents in Bastar perceived rice quality in Bastar to be "good" (Tables 5-8 and 5-9). These are in line with our observations in quality and shortfall in grains recorded for the mid-day meal program (see chapter 4).

Table 5-8: Majority of AWWs rated the quality of rice as being 'medium' or 'good'; Bastar was an exception, with a greater proportion reporting the quality as being 'good'

AWWs' rating of quality of rice				
	Bastar	**Janjgir Champa**	**Rajnandgaon**	**Surajpur**
Poor	0%	1%	1%	0%
Medium	44%	68%	66%	76%
Good	55%	31%	33%	24%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

[106] 19% of those who faced a shortfall stopped serving meals; this account for 6% of all AWCs surveyed.

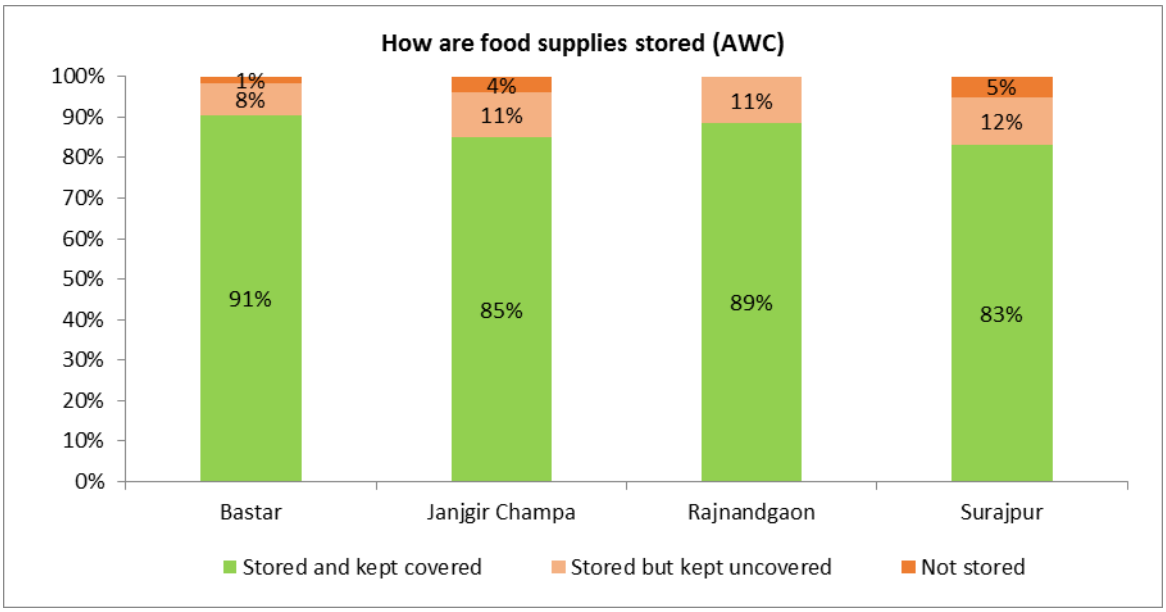
Table 5-9: Most SHGs also reported the quality of rice as being 'medium' to 'good'; Bastar showed a significantly higher proportion rating the rice as being 'good'

SHGs' rating of quality of rice				
	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Poor		2%		
Medium	55%	70%	62%	87%
Good	45%	28%	38%	13%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

At the AWC, it was observed that the majority of centers kept their grains well-stored and covered.

Figure 5-14: Food supplies were mostly kept covered and stored at the AWCs



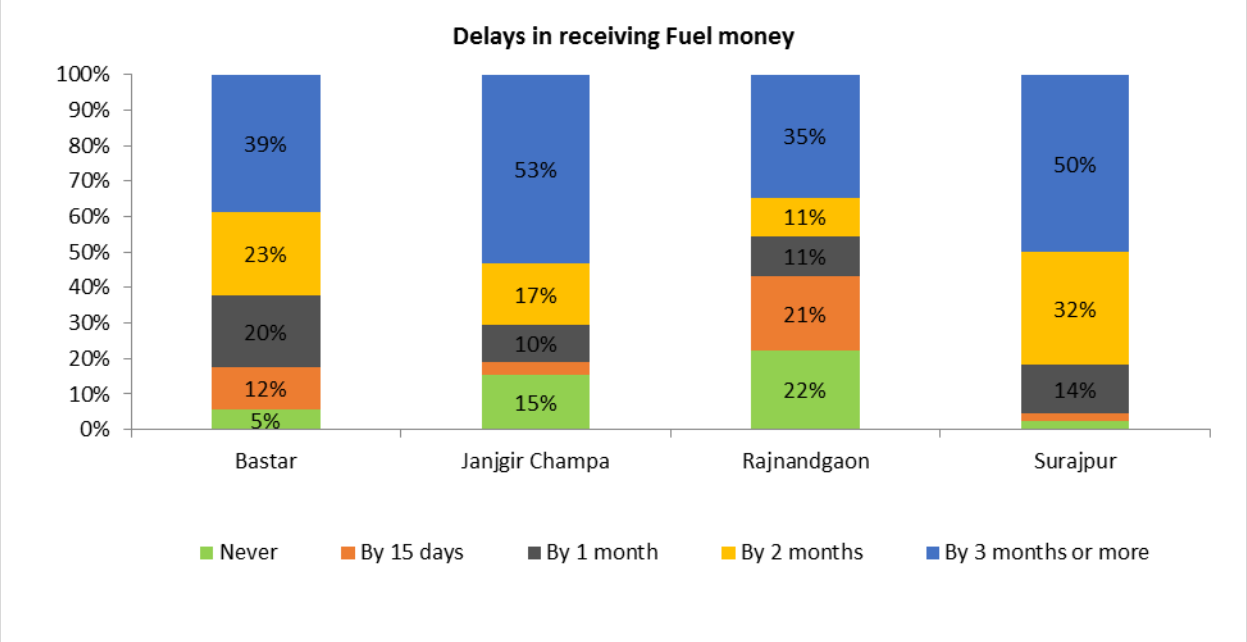
Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Money for fuel: One of the common refrains we heard during the survey, from both AWWs and Sahayikas was the substantial delay in receipt of fuel money, which impeded their ability to serve hot cooked meals at the center. In fact of the AWWs who said they faced a constraint in their work, 72% said delays in fuel money were a significant obstacle (about 80% identified delays in their honorarium as a problem – see previous section – and another 72% spoke of lack of toilets)[107].

The chart below shows substantial delays in the receipt of money for fuel at the AWC (this money goes to the AWH's account). Over half of all AWHs in Janjgir Champa and Surajpur reported delays of 3 months or more in the receipt of this money.

[107] The question had multiple choices.

***Figure 5-15**: All districts reported substantial delays in receipt of fuel money; Janjgir Champa and Surajpur fared substantially worse than others*



Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Money for cooking costs: The money for cooking costs is received directly in the SHG's bank account and is based on fixed norms of Rs. 6 [108]per child. It is to be spent on buying vegetables, pulses etc. for hot cooked meals.

It was near impossible to analyze or interpret the bank passbooks of SHGs to be able to make any detailed observations. Most SHGs are engaged in more-than one task (they may be providing MDM to a school, act as micro-lending organizations, providing SNP to more than one AWC etc.) and use the same passbook for all activities. Further, the SHG passbooks are often not updated and SHG heads/ members interviewed were unable to decipher entries to report any data specific to SNP provisioning at AWCs. In some cases, for instance, not all points of data (amount received, amount withdrawn, and amount spent) had been filled in. Table 5-10 provides a snapshot of data obtained from the 633 SHGs interviewed. The survey asked for every month between April 2013 and March 2015, data for the following 3 variables: amount received for provision of hot cooked meals, amount withdrawn and amount spent. Irrespective of being able to disaggregate these amounts from other monies received by the SHG, we found that SHG passbooks and cashbooks were not updated. For the 633 SHGs interviewed, data on (any) amount received was only available for 406 SHGs, and these numbers tapered for amount withdrawn and amount spent, making it impossible to decipher any trends.

[108] ICDS website, MoWCD

Table 5-10: Big gaps in data in SHG passbooks

	Amount received	Amount withdrawn	Amount spent
Bastar	53	49	1
Janjgir Champa	74	72	5
Rajnandgaon	77	80	8
Surajpur	202	202	55
Passbooks with data	**406**	**403**	**69**

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

However, based on qualitative interviews with AWWs, SHG members and Supervisors it was found that SHGs often receive less than what they are expected to actually spend on SNP provisioning.

"Dal (pulses) costs Rs. 120 per kg in the market but we are still getting it reimbursed at older rates of Rs. 80 per kg."

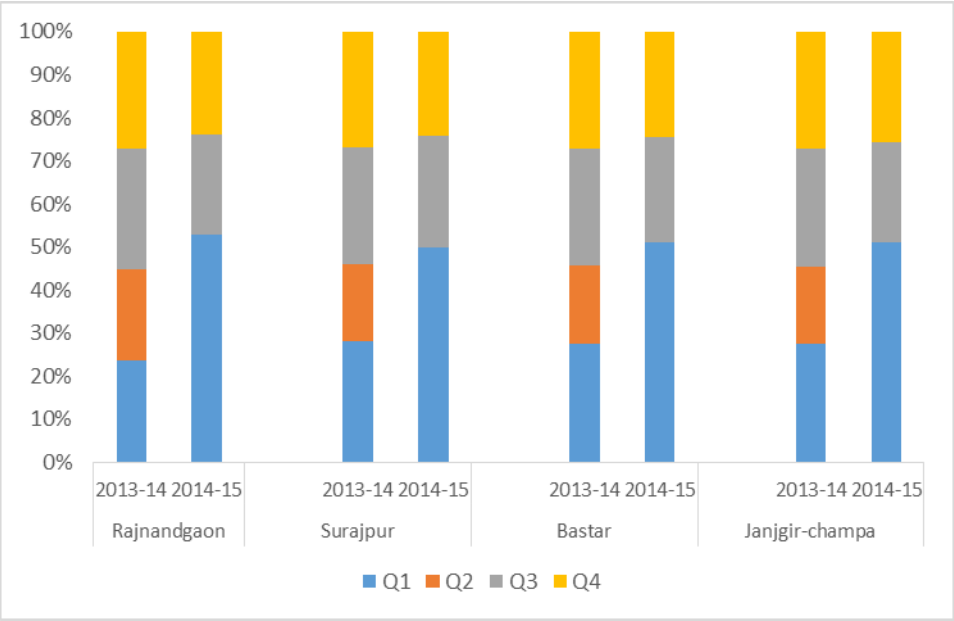
– An SHG member

SHGs also do not receive the cooking cost money on time and often have to buy vegetables, oil, spices and pulses on loan from the local market – similar to the problems that the SHGs cooking for MDM face (see chapter 4). While this is partly indicative of the nature of the rural economy in general, interviews from the field suggest that delays in receiving funds are a significant problem too.

Reasons for delay in grains and fuel/cooking money: What might be the reasons for delays in receipt of grains, and money for fuel and cooking costs?

It appears that release of grains from above is not a significant issue. The state and district level Naagrik Aapoorti Nigam (NAN) which is responsible for releasing rice, releases it in a fairly smooth fashion throughout the year. In fact, the release of grains from the state to the district improved in FY 2014-15, with about half of the grain allocation being made available to the districts by the first quarter itself (figure 5-16).

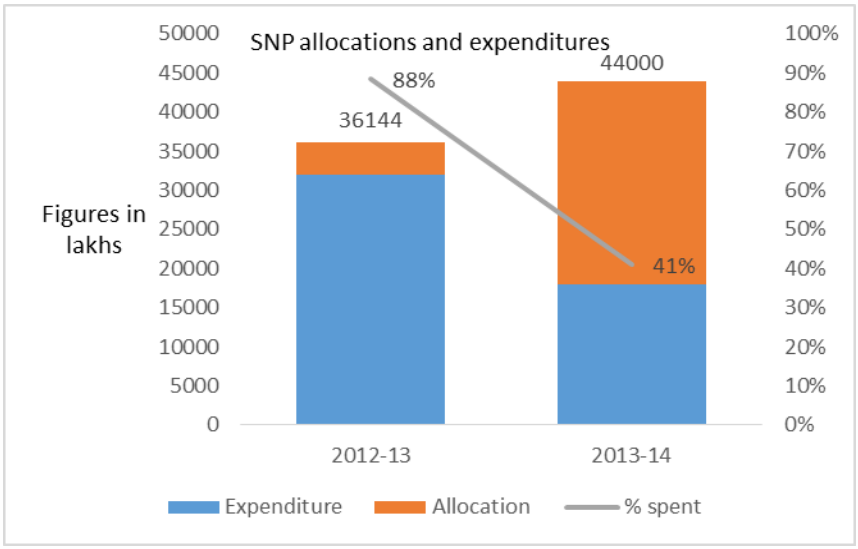
Figure 5-16: Release of grain from State to districts improved in 2014-15



Source: GoCG

While SNP budget data for FY 2014-15 were not available until the time of writing this report, data from FY 2013-14 and FY 2012-13 suggests some interesting trends. In FY 2013-14 (the most recent year for which data is available), only 41% of the allocated SNP (Supplementary Nutrition Programme) funds were spent by the State[109]. This is a near 50% decline from the previous year (figure 5-17). The reasons for this are unclear and were not shared with the research team, despite several requests. What is clear is that a gap between allocations and releases is not responsible for the decline– 99% of all allocations were released by the State and GoI in FY 2013-14.

Figure 5-17: Only 40% of SNP funds were spent in 2013-14

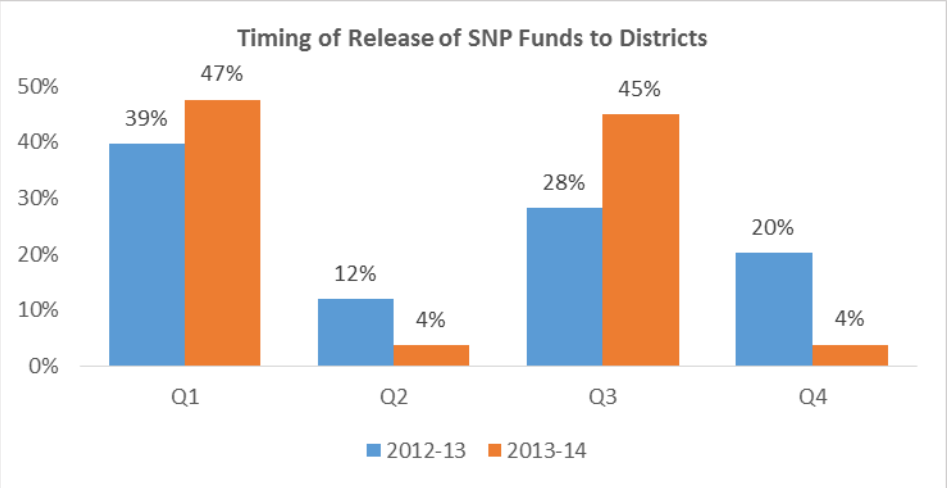


[109] SNP funds include, among others, spending on grains (to the district Naagrik Aapoorti Nigam), money for fuel and for vegetables etc. to the SHG.

Source: WCD Office, GoC; Note: Expenditure is calculated out of allocations

In FY 2013-14, nearly 50% of all SNP funds had been released to the districts in quarter 1 – and 96% had been released by the third quarter (figure 5-18).

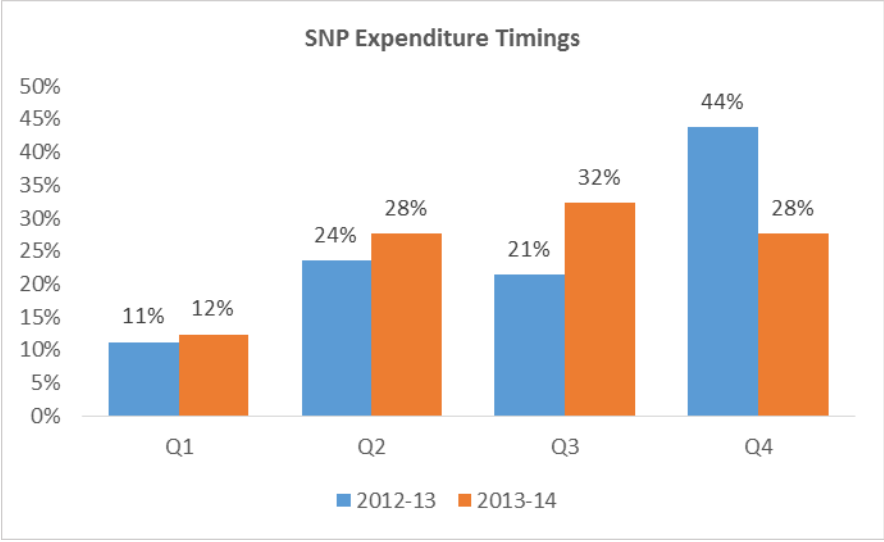
Figure 5-18: SNP funds released from State to districts mostly in quarters 1&3



Source: WCD Office, GoC

However, a majority (60%) of the expenditure under SNP was undertaken only in the latter half of the financial year (figure 5-19).

Figure 5-19: Bulk of SNP expenditure incurred in quarter 4



Source: WCD Office, GoC

In other words, data until FY 2013-14 show that districts are unable to spend a majority of their SNP allocations even when they are released fully and largely on time. This low spending could potentially result in gaps in the provisioning of hot meals at the AWC. Whether this low spending sustained in FY2014-15, and thus explained delays in receipt of fuel and cooking costs money, cannot be established because of lack of FY 2014-15 data.

5.4.3 Record keeping at AWCs

Like the survey did for SSA and RMSA, it sought to pull out facility-level financial records (AWC grants received, withdrawn and spent) and analyze them to see if an AWC was receiving the money it was supposed to and if/ how they chose to spend it. However, this exercise came to near-naught as an overwhelmingly large number of AWCs did not have any cashbooks available (see Table 4-11 below). Even when cashbooks and passbooks were available, they were rarely updated and the AWW was unable to interpret any of their entries. This was also true of the records of the SHGs that provided material for hot cooked meals at the AWC.

***Table 5-11**: Cashbooks were not available with many AWWs/SHGs; Surajpur fared better on record keeping*

		Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur	Total
SHGs	Surveyed	211	96	94	232	633
	Passbooks	53	74	77	202	406
	Cashbooks	1	5	8	55	69
	Passbooks available (%)	25%	77%	82%	87%	64%
	Cashbooks available (%)	0%	5%	9%	24%	11%
AWWs	Surveyed	211	131	96	239	677
	Passbooks	179	125	86	229	619
	Cashbooks*					107
	Passbooks available (%)	85%	95%	90%	96%	91%
	Cashbooks available (%)					16%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Of a total of 633 SHGs surveyed, passbooks were only available for 406 (64%) and cashbooks for 69 (11%). The numbers were slightly better for AWCs where 91% and 16% had passbooks and cashbooks available, respectively. Of the 4 districts, records at Surajpur AWCs appeared to be in relatively better shape.

A common reason offered for poor record keeping is that AWWs don't retain the records of the AWC – they are managed and updated by the Supervisors. This is partly because the average AWW has only a few years of education and is often unable to cope with the multitude of formats and registers that need to be maintained on a regular basis. Many AWWs interviewed reported that they asked their better-educated children or daughters-in-law for help and were just unable to cope with maintaining the different formats required of them, irrespective of how much training they received. Many AWWs interviewed were those that had been promoted from a Sahayika's post and did not have the skills needed to maintain registers, passbooks and cashbooks.

5.4.4 AWC Grants: Awareness, Coverage and Usability

As discussed above, records at the AWCs were very poorly maintained and nearly impossible to decipher and analyse. Even at the State-level, data shared with the research team was scant. In such a situation, there is limited clarity on the particular question of anganwadi grants.

All AWCs are given an annual grant or flexipool grant of Rs. 1,000 per annum for meeting emergency costs like referral arrangements, shortage of medicines and utensils. In addition, all AWCs functioning in government owned or non-rental buildings are given a maintenance grant of Rs. 2,400 per annum. Additionally, a contingency grant of Rs. 500 per annum is also given for emergency expenses.

The State WCD department reported that the only grant that they have in fact been sending to AWCs over the last 3-4 years is the flexi grant. No other grants have been disbursed, primarily owing to limited funds.

Since there is no way to verify this in the absence of State-level data and the fact that the records at the AWCs themselves are in poor shape, we report findings only on the Flexi Grant (table 5-12).

Table 5-12: On average, 3 in every 4 of all AWCs surveyed had received the Flexi Grant in FY 2014-15, with marginal improvement in coverage from the previous year

Percentage coverage of ICDS grants among the surveyed AWCs						
		Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur	Average
Flexi Grant	2013-2014	67%	64%	67%	87%	71%
	2014-2015	75%	69%	70%	89%	76%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Coverage of the flexi grant is much higher than reported in other surveys (e.g. in RSOC, the proportion of rural AWCs that received this grant was 43.5%; both at an all India level and in Chhattisgarh). Since this grant appears to be reaching most AWCs, there is also high awareness around it. The majority of AWWs surveyed had heard of the grant. However, even then, 10-20% of all AWWs hadn't heard of this grant and didn't know what to do with it. The awareness was lowest in Bastar (table 5-13). Awareness of the other two annual grants under ICDS was even lower.

Table 5-13: Majority of AWWs surveyed were aware of the flexi fund; awareness low for other grants, particularly poor in Bastar

Percentage of AWWs that were aware of different grants (FY 2014-15)				
	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Flexi grant	81%	95%	89%	98%
Maintenance grant	45%	59%	75%	51%
Contingency Fund	55%	74%	64%	88%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Our survey suggests that poor record keeping translates into poor awareness of AWC grants and how they should be spent. A problem that arose during the survey was the inability of an AWW to interpret passbooks and cashbooks (where they existed) and report which amounts of money were for what. They often had to call the Supervisor and check. In such a scenario, any disbursement of funds to the AWC (in the form of grants) loses meaning and either lies unspent or is spent meaninglessly.

Low awareness is compounded by the fact that there is no fixed time of the year when the grant is received. Typically, the funds may reach the AWW bank account "any time". When they do, the CDPO notifies the Supervisor who in turn notifies the AWW. Funds under "Flexi Funds", for example (Rs 1,000 annually to each AWC) may arrive in two installments of Rs. 500 each, with no clarity on when the final installment will reach. AWWs reported that when they see such entries in their bank accounts, they call the Supervisor to check and it is only then that they know what this money was for. Limited interaction between Supervisors and AWWs (as shown later) suggests that even such clarification may not be sought with much regularity.

Even the Supervisors interviewed by the survey team had no clear, consistent answers on the issue of grants and said they don't always understand what the funds are for.

"Jaise aadesh aate hai hum waisa hi karte hai…aur jaan ne ki koshish nahi ki…"

– A Supervisor

Finally, there was a broad perception that funds received were also scarce and not enough to meet the needs of an AWC.

"Most of the funds received under grants are spent on organizing events like independence day/ shivir divas etc. and nothing is left for utilization at the centre. Flooring needs some repair in the centre, most of the centres do not have fans; but no money is sent for this."

– An Anganwadi Worker

5.4.5 Challenges of Governance

How the facility interacts with the administration: All anganwadis must be regularly monitored by not only the Supervisors, but also the CDPO and district officers. However, the role of the Supervisor is most critical. There are 25 anganwadis under the purview of each supervisor and she/he must visit each at least once a month. She must serve as both a mentor to and monitor of anganwadi workers. Anganwadi workers typically are women with few years of schooling; at the same time, they are expected to deliver a range of services, including filling up numerous, detailed formats on a regular basis. In this scenario, a lot of hand-holding by the supervisors may be needed for an AWW to effectively perform her role. Supervisors also prepare AWWs' attendance records and submit these to the CDPO.

Survey data shows poor monitoring of the anganwadis, by all levels of administration; surprisingly Bastar performs better than the other 3 districts on monitoring; except in Bastar, over 10% of all AWCs surveyed had never been visited by a Supervisor in the last year (table 5-14). More worryingly, in cases where a supervisor did visit, the average duration since her last visit ranged from 3 to 5 months.

Of all the 4 districts, Bastar performs the best on monitoring indicators, including visits by the district officers. This is a very positive finding given the many challenges of state monitoring in tribal, LWE areas (poor terrain, safety concerns, bad roads etc.)

Table 5-14: Poor monitoring of AWCs across different levels of government

	Bastar	Janjgir Champa	Rajnandgaon	Surajpur
Monitoring register not available	16%	2%	14%	17%
Register available, but DPO never visited	77%	91%	82%	83%
Register available, but CDPO never visited	71%	93%	66%	74%
Register available, but Supervisor never visited	3%	11%	12%	12%

Source: Chhattisgarh PAISA survey 2015

Insights from interviews with Supervisors, CDPOs and DPOs may allow us to understand the reasons for low monitoring:

1. Practical Challenges: A Supervisor interviewed by the survey team said that while she was supposed to visit 25 anganwadis in a month, she barely manages to cover 17. Going through all the records at a centre takes time. Once gaps and issues are identified, she has to sit and explain things to the Anganwadi worker. She must also then follow up a few days later to ensure the worker has understood. This allows her to focus on the weakest AWWs, but often at the cost of the others.

2. Political interference: Interviews from the ground revealed that the AWW and SHG selection process is highly politicized. Further, if an AWW comes from an influential family within a village, she is able to rally villagers around her and there is little supervisors can do other than submit reports to the higher authorities.

   "Saari zimmedari supervisor ki hi hai. Karyakarta ko pata hai ki usse koi nahi hata sakta"

   – A Supervisor

3. Supervisors are overworked: Even though the norms stipulate that each Supervisor should only be responsible for 25 Anganwadi Centres, many Supervisors reported having to monitor more than this number. As on March 31, 2014 (the most recently available data), 19% of all Supervisor positions in the State were vacant[110]. This places extra work burden on Supervisors who are in place, negatively impacting their ability to deliver. One of the Supervisors interviewed said that they would greatly benefit by an assistant or *sehkarmi*.

   Supervisors also often end up getting attached to Project offices, as there are many vacancies at that level too. 61% of CDPO posts in the State were vacant as on March 2014. [111] This results in extra work pressure on the CDPOs and brings down any monitoring by them.

4. Low prioritization and follow up: Interviews with officers at both the project and district level reveal that there is not much administrative emphasis from the "higher levels" on monitoring of anganwadis.

[110] ICDS data tables, state-wise details of projects, AWCs, beneficiaries, vacancy positions, and nutrition status of children as on March 2014. Available online at: ICDS Data Tables.

[111] ICDS data tables, state-wise details of projects, AWCs, beneficiaries, vacancy positions, and nutrition status of children as on March 2014. Available online at: http://wcd.nic.in/icdsimg/currentstatus22092014.pdf

"No one looks at the monitoring reports they prepare so strictly."

– A DPO

5. Challenges with monitoring of ready to eat meals: The Supervisor also plays an important role in the monitoring and supervision of the preparation of Ready to Eat meal packets. These packets are typically prepared by a large SHG and distributed to all AWCs attached to it. The supervisor is supposed to visit the meal preparation units of her sector once a month. On this day, the take home ration is made (mixed) on the basis of specified norms and the Supervisor must supervise this process. However, Supervisors seemed very frustrated with this process. They said that not only do they not have the skills to make any proper assessments of quality, the SHGs "don't listen to them". This makes any monitoring redundant.

   "Hume nahi pata chal pata ki ye kya mila rahe hai aur sirf phasne ke liye, supervision me phanse hue hai."

   – A Supervisor

   Earlier, AWWs were members of the SHG and could ensure some minimum quality standards, but new rules disallow that.

Inadequate Human Resources and excessive work pressures: While vacancies under key posts are not a problem of Chhattisgarh alone, the State has by far the highest CDPO vacancy among its peers (table 5-15).

Table 5-15: Chhattisgarh has the highest CDPO vacancy among states with large tribal populations

	CDPO/ACDPOs			Supervisors		
States	Sanctioned by states	Vacant	% Vacancy	Sanctioned by states	Vacant	% Vacancy
Chhattisgarh	**323**	**197**	**61%**	**1617**	**310**	**19%**
Jharkhand	212	48	23%	1259	619	49%
Madhya Pradesh	527	133	25%	3164	502	16%
Andhra Pradesh	406	72	18%	2196	604	28%
Odisha	338	33	10%	2808	834	30%

Source: http://icds-wcd.nic.in/icdsimg/QPR0315-for%20upload-17-8-2015.pdf

When the gaps are so significant, those that are in position are overburdened with work. Officers at all levels report excessive work pressures and cite large vacancies as a reason.

"Projects and district work suffers because sanctioned posts are too few – and on top of that, there are vacancies."

- A District officer

Supervisors are crucial to build and maintain the link between the facility and the administration and they are routinely overburdened with tasks, often outside those related to the ICDS. Like the AWWs, Supervisors too are assigned additional duties such as those under immunization work, ration card attestation, election duty, exam duties etc. Even district officers may be assigned such duties. This paucity of staff also impacts monitoring, as shown by the survey data.

Availability of data entry persons and computer operators is another concern raised by many officers. This becomes particularly relevant with the introduction of Annual Programme Implementation Plans (APIPs) so that information coming in every month can be entered in online systems and viewed carefully in the context of planning. Some districts reported hiring data entry staff privately because no posts were sanctioned under the project.

These vacancies translate into very busy work days for district and project officers. A DPO's office has a mammoth work mandate. He/ she is responsible for all matters relating to women and child issues in the district, including maternal and child health, protection from abuse and early childhood education. Not only does this entail many tasks, it also means that the DPO's office serves as the hub of coordination and activity among multiple departments that are also dealing with these tasks. On a typical day, a DPO routinely coordinates work between departments of health, education, his own department and sometimes even the police and the PWD.

"My main job is inter-departmental coordination."

- A DPO

"An individual cannot possibly do all that is expected of my position."

– A DPO

DPOs report that they find it very challenging to make or stick to any work plans for "two straight days" owing to the nature of their jobs. Much of the DPO's work day is spent handling one crisis to another, following one order to another, and any attempts at an organized work day are "futile".

There are also multiple reporting formats that must be regularly filled and updated, cutting across schemes. There are many requests for information and data that come from the Directorate and much of a DPO's time is spent reporting on these. This is particularly problematic in the absence of CDPOs. Project offices also do not have adequate support staff (data entry operators, clerks) and thus any information that is sought from them often takes a long time to put together. DPOs and CDPOs lament the lack of organized functioning at the State office and say that requests for the same data are sent repeatedly, wasting much of their time.

Poor Planning: An important reform being taken by the WCD department is to introduce decentralized planning under the ICDS. Unlike RMSA or SSA, the ICDS (until recently) did not mandate making State-specific plans. The annual planning exercise was done at the level of GoI and followed a largely normative approach where funds were released to the states based on approved norms. However, this was seen to cause "sub-optimal programme outputs and outcomes"[112] and the need was felt for a comprehensive planning exercise at both the State and district levels. In 2010, State governments were given detailed guidelines and asked to prepare APIPs.

Districts visited for the current survey reported that they did indeed prepare an APIP for the first time in 2013-14. The State government had shared an APIP format with all districts to prepare this plan. The

[112] Introduction of APIP in ICDS, Learning From First Year: 2011-12, MoWCD, Government of India

districts shared this format further with the CDPOs to compile all anganwadis' demands and needs. In principle, it looks very much like the decentralized plan process under the SSA or RMSA.

In their first attempt, however, it appeared that the districts took "2-3 months" to put together this plan but haven't heard much on it since its submission.

"Maybe it wasn't very good – we haven't received any feedback from the state yet".

– A DPO

Before the APIPs were introduced, all planning was done directly at the State level using the district MPR and MERs[113]. However, in interviews with district project offices, project officers expressed their inability to understand how this new process of APIPs was any different. Even earlier, districts were asked to fill out details on their requirements in the MPR and MER. They only viewed their role as that of reporting data and not as planners, and perhaps the new process gave them the authority to plan. While part of this may be an issue of poor communication by the State, the realities of day to day functioning of a DPO's office and the resources available to it mean that very little planning is actually done.

"Things haven't changed that much. But it is called a plan now."

– A DPO

Supervisors and CDPOs interviewed by the survey team were of the view that no planning actually takes place and there is a fixed amount of money coming in for different things. Even if one AWC's needs are different from another, the differences are not considered in fund allocations and "everyone receives the same thing."

DPOs reported that even though they had a large amount of data routinely coming to the District office, they had no resource person skilled enough to make any use of it. A large number of monthly reports were routinely generated but "nobody looked at them" to make any sense of the numbers.

"There is only one data operator and everyone is after him."

– A DPO

Districts also didn't receive any untied funds under ICDS and had very little room to focus on what they perceived as their priorities.

The problems of planning must be viewed, finally, in light of survey findings (reported earlier) vis-à-vis poor data management at the anganwadi level. Now that states and districts are indeed making these APIPs, the availability and quality of granular data at the facility becomes important and in the absence of proper documentation at the facility, any meaningful bottom-up planning becomes impossible.

[113] Monthly Progress Reports and Monthly Expenditure Reports, prepared monthly by each district

5.5 Concluding Reflections

Our survey data on anganwadis presents a grim picture. The fact that we undertook a census of all anganwadis present in the village, in all the 240 villages we visited, and that on some indicators, all districts fare poorly, should be cause for immediate concern. Some of these issues have been highlighted by reports prior to ours, including official evaluations[114]. But it may be worth summarizing some critical gaps.

For one, there are serious deficiencies in infrastructure and equipment availability in anganwadis. While these gaps are larger in tribal districts, that Janjgir Champa and Rajnandgaon also perform poorly on some parameters suggests that the problem runs deeper. In particular, lack of usable toilets, facility to wash hands, lack of equipment for cooking, essential drugs and material for health monitoring (e.g. child growth charts, immunization charts, posters etc.), severely constrain anganwadi workers' and helpers' ability to fulfill the roles assigned to them viz. serving hygienic meals to children, and monitoring their nutrition levels.

Second, the anganwadi workers take the role of being barefoot soldiers for delivery of multiple government schemes. This, along with the many registers and formats they have to maintain, takes them away from focusing on ICDS delivery, particularly delivery of pre-school education. On a positive note, the AWWs have high awareness levels about issues such as when to supplement breastmilk, frequency at which children need to be weighed etc. Anganwadis in Chhattisgarh also open regularly, and for long hours in the day. But absence of AWWs from these centers because of additional duties, along with decrepit conditions in which anganwadis run, keeps parents from sending their wards to anganwadi centers, except at the time meals are served. They prefer instead to take their children to the fields or admit them into private nurseries.

Worker incentive is also diminished because of significant delays in honorariums. Delays in receiving money for fuel and (some) delays in grain flows, result in the worst case in a few anganwadis ceasing to serve hot cooked meals. Still others plough on using community contribution.

Third, the records maintained by anganwadis (and the SHGs that support them) are in a significantly poorer shape than those maintained, say at schools. While lower education levels of anganwadi workers may offer a partial explanation, some steps need to be undertaken to train both AWWs and helpers, and SHG members, particularly on how to fill cashbooks to monitor amounts withdrawn and those spent. In the absence of this information, expenditure tracking is difficult. Records on nutrition outcomes and weight measurement also need to be reported on, and tracked carefully. While our data suggest a significantly lower malnutrition levels, it is not in line with findings from other officials surveys. Part of the discrepancy may lie in anganwadi workers misclassifying weight records data. This an important capacity gap to address as it determines norms of nutrition and feeding. In the absence of accurate data, workers will continue to feed children, including malnourished ones who need more nutrition support, 'andaaz se'.

Fourth, fund releases against allocated funds are slow and reach districts only by the fourth quarter of a financial year. That, along with the anganwadi workers' inability to decipher which funds are for what (e.g. flexi grant money), constrain their ability to spend on say improvement of the anganwadi infrastructure.

[114] See for instance the Niti Aayog's evaluation of ICDS available at http://niti.gov.in/mgov_file/report-awc.pdf.

Finally, and as we found in the case of the other schemes, official monitoring remains sparse. What is particularly worrying is the supervisors' inability to cover the 25 anganwadis assigned to them in a month – by their own admission they are able to cover only 17. In turn, it affects monitoring of AWW attendance, which in turn determines release of honorariums to them. However, the fact that supervisor monitoring is most frequent in Bastar, a geographically challenging area, suggests that monitoring can improve. At more senior levels, CDPO vacancies in Chhattisgarh are the highest when the state is compared to its peers. This limits not just supervision of supervisors, but according to district officials, also impairs them in collating all block-level data to prepare a district plan. Filling these human resource vacancies is not an immediate fix, but in the long-term it may offer a sustainable solution to the problems that plague Chhattisgarh's delivery of Integrated Child Development Services.

6 Policy Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The implementation gaps in the schemes covered by the study have been detailed in earlier chapters. Based on the findings of this report, Accountability Initiative's own work in other states and the extensive policy debate around public service delivery and linked to that the debate on decentralization, this chapter proposes some broad policy recommendations for the Chhattisgarh government.

To begin with, our survey suggests substantial challenges in the delivery of the four schemes covered by the study. While the details are available in the previous chapters, broadly these challenges can be summarized to be about: (a) delays in fund flows; (b) human resource gaps; (c) infrastructure gaps and ineffective bottom up planning; and (d) poor data availability and management.

6.2 Challenges

6.2.1 Delays in fund flows

Our survey data reveal that delays in salaries of functionaries, be it the anganwadi worker or helper, or the panchayat shikshaks, are common and combined with substantial delays in receipt of other funds required for delivery (e.g. money for fuel or cooking costs or TA/DA), create a context of poor incentive to work.

For instance, it is common for Shiksha Karmis teaching in an SSA school to receive salaries with a 2-3 month delay. Under RMSA, 70-80% of Shiksha Karmis said they had received salary in the month prior to the survey, but it was with a lag of 1-2 months.

Substantial delays are also observed in the honorarium payments of the cook-cum-helpers (CCH) working on the mid-day meal programme in schools. Nearly half of all MDM cook-cum-helpers (CCH) surveyed reported that they did not receive their honorarium on time – in Surajpur, this was a significant challenge with nearly 30% of the CCH facing a delay of over 4 months in receiving their honorariums.

Large delays are observed, similarly, in honorarium payments of both the AWW and the AWH under the ICDS, most significantly in Surajpur and Janjgir Champa. In Surajpur, 76% of all AWWs surveyed reported average delays of 2 months or more in the receipt of their honorariums, and 30% reported delays of 3 months or more[115]. Among the AWHs, 40% in Janjgir Champa and 32% in Surajpur reported delays of 3 months or more in the receipt of their honorarium.

Finally, delays are also common in receipt of school grants. None of the secondary schools covered by the study had received RMSA school grants in FY 2014-15. As for SSA school grants, while a large proportion of schools received the grants in both the financial years, the timing of receipt was both uncertain as well as delayed, with FY 2014-15 witnessing greater delays than FY 2013-14. Delays in receipt of grant monies can severely limit both the ability of the school to spend these funds and also the heads under which such money can be spent. Further, inconsistencies in the timing impede the ability of the school management

[115] Enumerators checked last date of salary received from the AWW/AWH passbooks.

committees to make any meaningful plans about the use of this money as they never know how much to expect and by when.

Interestingly, our analyses of budgetary data suggest that fund delays are partially explained by delays in fund release, by both the state and the central government under SSA, and by the state government in the case of RMSA. What is of concern from the point of view of Chhattisgarh is that even when GoI is found to have improved its performance, delays in fund release continue at the State level.

6.2.2 Human resource gaps

Chhattisgarh faces large gaps in the availability of teachers, particularly in secondary schools, and administrative staff for the ICDS. Teacher availability in secondary schools for subjects like Science, Mathematics and English is a challenge, and many secondary schools in Chhattisgarh are not even able to meet the RMSA PTR norms. In the case of the ICDS, the available administrative machinery to monitor and supervise the scheme is severely over-burdened as 19% of all Supervisor posts and 61% of all CDPO posts lie vacant in the State (as of March 2014, the most recently available data). While these are gaps that cannot be fixed in the near future, they end up acting as a strain on a delivery system that is already overstretched.

6.2.3 Infrastructure gaps and ineffective bottom-up planning

Another major weakness emerges in the state of infrastructure available for delivering these services. Both primary and secondary school infrastructure in the State is deficient on several parameters, particularly usable toilets, availability of drinking water and boundary walls in primary schools and labs in secondary schools. However, the survey found that this is not necessarily offset by any notable bottom-up demand for such infrastructure. This is largely because of the absence of a functioning, robust system through which such upward mobilization of facility-level needs can be expressed. Not only do few schools make school-level development plans that would express these needs, but those that do, are not trained on how to make such plans or take into consideration larger stakeholder opinions, including those of parents.

Interviews with district-level officers of SSA and RMSA found that the senior management too lays little emphasis incorporating these plans into a larger, district level planning process. Block and district level officials responsible for making plans also do not visit schools regularly enough to be able to absorb school needs and account for them in their decisions. Consequently, the few civil works that are sanctioned are mostly not in line with school demands or requirements, and those the minor works that are implemented (largely through panchayats) fall outside the line of monitoring of the education department.

6.2.4 Poor data availability and management

Finally, poor record keeping at the facility as well as the State level is a serious problem, particularly in the context of the ICDS. Financial records at the anganwadi such as passbooks and cashbooks are mostly not available. Even when cashbooks and passbooks are available, they are rarely updated and the AWW is unable to interpret many of the entries. This is also true of the records of the SHGs that provide material for hot cooked meals at the AWC, and SHGs that serve mid-day meals at primary schools. Most worryingly, data management of the ICDS at the State level is significantly poorer than the way such data is managed and made available under the other three schemes.

As mentioned earlier, none of these gaps are unique to Chhattisgarh. Studies of social sector schemes undertaken by Accountability Initiative in other states suggest similar challenges. However, each of these challenges can be tackled through small reforms. It is recognized that at the time of writing this report, the Government of Chhattisgarh had already taken a few steps to address some of the key concerns reported by the study. A "Gunvatta Abhiyan" (or quality improvement mission) has been initiated, for example, by the education department to improve monitoring of schools including mandatory bi-annual visits to primary schools by officials. There is a proposal to extend this initiative to secondary schools in the next few years. Further, the State government has issued an order to: (1) achieve 100% electrification of schools within the next 3 years; and (2) directly transfer all school grants into the school accounts w.e.f. FY 2015-16.

There are many other innovations that Chhattisgarh has put in place (e.g. using SHGs for provision of MDM; involving panchayats in selection of SHGs, implementation of civil works, and selection of teachers; having an online monitoring system to streamline grain allocation etc.) which already give it the platform needed to bring about further improvements. Focusing on the small details of governance can help the State bring about significant improvements in social sector delivery.

6.3 Recommendations

This chapter presents an attempt to draw on our earlier work, and Chhattisgarh findings, to offer some broad policy recommendations.

6.3.1 Improving public financial management in the State

The first set of recommendations relate to improving the public financial management system in the State.

Across schemes, we found the fund management systems to be riddled with process related bottlenecks. As a result, there was a significant gap between budgetary allocations, releases and expenditures on the ground. This inability of the government to move budgetary allocations down the administrative chain in a timely, predictable manner mean that facilities such as schools and anganwadis are not aware of when grants would come in, which constrains their ability to use them in a manner that is in line with the facility's immediate requirements. Delays in fund release are also impacted by a number of process inefficiencies. These include, for example, misreporting of bank account numbers (e.g. by SHGs) and limited co-ordination with local banks. All of these challenges impact funds-flows such that the right levels of administration do not have access to (sanctioned) resources when they need it.

Fund flows can be made smooth by building a just-in-time system for expenditure management so that expenditure units (i.e., schools and anganwadis, upwards to the block ad district level) can receive funds directly in their accounts, on a needs basis. This will eliminate the delays caused in transferring money across different levels of government, reduce the quantum of unutilized funds that are currently parked in bank accounts across the delivery chain and ensure greater transparency by enabling regular, real-time tracking of funds. To build a just-in-time transfer system, an **Expenditure Information Network (EIN) can be set up**, which functions as a fund allocation, release and monitoring system. This will bring the fund

allocating agency (i.e. the state) and all expenditure-incurring agencies (schools/anganwadis, blocks and districts) onto one single IT-based platform[116].

The current expenditure management system of the government is designed as a "push" system with a hierarchical chain of command. Accordingly, every expenditure authority is charged with releasing lump sum instalments to the next level of the administration. The release of these instalments is based on multiple levels of authorization and clearances. Much of this can be addressed if the **system is changed to a simple, real-time "pull" system**. Under this, the multiple expenditure units of the government (ministries, departments, districts, facilities) would be linked to a central expenditure hub linked so that the expenditure unit can directly pull money into its account, just when it needs it. Linked with the trinity of the Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar and Mobiles (JAM), such a pull or demand driven system can use internet-enabled workflow driven IT platforms to harness the potential of JAM to solve both ""first-mile" problems of transferring central and state funds to local implementation agencies in a timely, efficient and transparent manner" as well as ""last-mile" problems of sending benefits to beneficiary or vendor bank accounts without delays."[117]

Such an online pull system will ensure that not only does money reach the intended recipient on time, but will also ensure transparency, as anyone from the district collector to citizens can track the flow of money in real time and delays and opacity in the system as demonstrated by the results of this report can be addressed to a substantial degree.

In the case of Chhattisgarh, payments under the SSA and RMSA are already done via an online treasury. But it still remains a "push" system with a hierarchical chain of command. Making use of the already established IT infrastructure and creating a real time "pull" system can help Chhattisgarh decentralize expenditure management to the lowest level. Similar systems can be put in place for the ICDS and MDM as well. While this "pull" system should be the long-term goal, changes can be made in the existing system to make it more transparent. In the present system, while payments are all transferred electronically and on a real time basis, the system is seemingly still not transparent enough to trace documentation related to the payments. For example, a system whereby vouchers for all payments could be verified right up to the school/ beneficiary level – can strengthen transparency of such an online system even further. Also, details of each of these payments can be made available to all officers through the administrative hierarchy and even the citizens to allow tracking and ensure transparency.

6.3.2 Empowering districts by providing block grants

Once a transparent expenditure information network is in place, the State could think of providing an **untied block grant to districts for meeting infrastructure norms and other challenges** faced by facilities such as schools and anganwadis. As results of our survey reveal, while gaps and weaknesses exist across all districts, their nature and magnitude is different across different districts. For example, tribal districts do not necessarily perform poorly on all parameters. In fact, our study seems to disprove this fallacy. The most

[116] "Pull, no push, to open up spending", Livemint, T.R. Raghunandan, Yamini Aiyar, 23rd June, 2015. See also the Nandan Nilekani "Report of the Technology Advisory Group for Unique Projects", January 2011 (available at http://finmin.nic.in/reports/tagup_report.pdf).

[117] "Doing More With Less: Developing JAM+ to reform Public Finance Management in India": Santosh Mathew and Dwijo Goswami, April 23, 2016 vol ll no 17 Economic & Political Weekly

significant illustration is that of Bastar which appears to do better than others on ICDS monitoring, and AWW awareness levels, suggesting that human resource training may not be as much of an issue. On the other hand, non-tribal districts like Janjgir Champa appear to fare worse in provisioning of MDM. Implementation gaps are also observed in Rajnandgaon, which does better in most indicators, but not all. And there are gaps like provisioning of usable toilets that need to addressed across the state. Clearly, there is no one simple solution that would work across districts and responses would need to be tweaked based on context.

However, our study found that allocations to a district don't take such differences into account – for instance, the civil works that are sanctioned, in the case of schools, are few and are also not in line with the school's needs. Surajpur faces acute shortages in boundary walls and computer labs in schools, while teacher shortages are far worse in Bastar than in other districts. Different problems must translate into a different priority agenda and districts must have the room to make such an agenda.

6.3.3 Balancing autonomy with bottom-up accountability

Equally important for effective block grant utilisation at the district level is a process that ensures that **districts are held accountable for efficient use of these funds.** In other words, autonomy must be balanced with accountability and transparency. Transparency can be ensured with the expenditure management system described above. So that districts are also held accountable for fund use, the government may also consider making it mandatory for districts to make a three-year estimation of funds needed, prioritizing specific activities, and making these plans public. However, for the process to be truly decentralized, these plans need to draw on school level priorities. An effective and strong bottom-up planning process is the only way to ensure that ground level needs are collated and communicated to the district level and are prioritized.

Weak bottom up planning lies at the center of many challenges faced in implementing social sector schemes in the State. In the case of SSA and RMSA, while SMCs and SMDCs were in place in a majority of schools visited for the survey, and some schools were even making SDPs, the SDPs were not created in a participatory manner, and did not address the school's most pressing needs. School level plans were also not reflected in the state's budgeting and planning processes. Unlike RMSA or SSA, the ICDS (until recently) did not mandate making State-specific plans. Districts visited for the current survey reported that they did indeed prepare an APIP for the first time in 2013-14. However, while they took "2-3 months" to put together this plan, districts hadn't heard much on it since its submission.

There could be multiple reasons for such plans neither reflecting ground realities, nor finding reflection in the overall district or state plan. One reason could be the poor capacity of schools and anganwadis to prepare such plans in the absence of guidance - only 34% of the SSA schools surveyed across the four districts had received any **training to make a school development plan.** Second, our field interviews suggested that SMCs worked largely in a non-participatory fashion, compiling opinions of a few teachers, the headmaster and community leaders. Views of the larger majority of parents, let alone those belonging to excluded groups, were absent. An annual information campaign to disseminate information on the roles and responsibilities of SMCs could be thought of to **enhance awareness levels**, especially among parents of children who attend schools. The state can also consider setting aside some funds for **SMC trainings**. **Modules on how to prepare school development plans**, for example, can also be developed and SMCs can

be trained on them, including on the process and methodology of preparing such a plan. At the Accountability Initiative, for example, we have prepared **toolkits** which are being used to support SMCs make relevant and effective SDPs. These easy-to-use tools help the SMC collect the appropriate school-level data; and provide formats to the SMC for planning, tracking grants receipts and expenditures, and to create a comprehensive Annual Work Plan.

6.3.4 Putting in place better data management systems, strengthening the ones that exist to enable better decision making

There are several steps that need to be taken before lower administrative levels, for example the districts, are able to take their own autonomous decisions. The first step to doing so is supplying them with **good data from the ground** which helps them track performance. Poor field level data constrains the process of decentralization through two channels. First, it weakens the ability of districts to encourage and lay emphasis on any bottom-up planning. ICDS supervisors interviewed for the study, for example, admitted that no planning actually takes place, because the records at the facility level are in poor shape. They are therefore unable to accurately estimate the needs of anganwadis under them and report to the districts, so they can incorporate these demands in the district level plans. Second, poor data management, particularly at the facility level, translates into poor awareness of frontline workers. For example, we found that AWWs were unable to decipher or explain the amounts in their passbooks and cashbooks. In such a scenario, any disbursement of funds to the facility loses meaning. In some cases, AWWs do not know what the amount is for and it lies unspent. In yet others, where they do spend it, they are unable to record it in a manner that they can report it to the higher levels. Improving record-keeping at lower levels, therefore, is key and along with a strong data based information system, can become a strong aspect of governance reform. It can be achieved through **training of frontline workers on how to maintain records**, especially cashbooks.

Some more challenges with respect to data must be noted here. In many district and block offices, we found that while data were coming in, they were often not analyzed or used for purposes of tracking or monitoring. To illustrate, take the case of the online software that determines allocation of grains for MDM. While it has to a large extent streamlined grain allocation and delivery for MDM in the state, rarely did we hear of officials using reports generated by the software during their monitoring visits to schools (during which they were also, presumably, charged with the responsibility of monitoring MDM). This is despite the software providing for information on multiple data points e.g. state of kitchens and cooking devices in schools, cooks appointed, coupon generation, MDM allocation and release, transportation of grains etc. Had such data been analyzed, and used as information for monitoring, we would not have seen gaps such as schools reporting not receiving grain coupons for some months, or not getting the grains allocated against these coupons in some months, due to which they had to even stop, in some instances, serving MDM. These appeared to be the most important complaints about the MDM in the field.

At one level, this is a problem of human resources. In the case of the ICDS, for example, DPOs reported that even though they had a large amount of data routinely coming to the District office, they had no resource person skilled enough to make any use of it. District and block offices are not adequately manned by MIS and computer operators. Where present, these officers are not trained to analyze the data coming from the field. Instead, they end up serving mostly as data entry operators. **Training data entry operators or MIS**

officers to analyze reports coming from the field could go a long way in briefing senior officers on field level situations so they can take effective decisions.

At another level, it is also a problem of whether the **data that are collected are in a format that is useful for taking decisions.** In the case of the MDM software, for example, there appeared to be no field to capture monthly attendance, which in turn affects expenditure against grain and cooking cost allocation. Coverage of such information could potentially help officials monitor the scheme more effectively, to rein in, say additional grain requisitions. It could also help the state take steps towards cases where meals are stopped[118]. Finally, it could potentially create a perception among frontline staff e.g. headmasters, that they have a useful tool for reporting their problems, and a fear that they are being monitored. In the ICDS similarly, CDPOs working in block offices complained how difficult it was for them to read the "formats" that were sent to them by supervisors. The question that needs to be asked then is: what data would CDPOs need to be able to monitor anganwadis well, to be a problem solver and ensure responsiveness? And does the data they have actually allow them to take decisions to solve problems?

Finally, data collected and analyzed is all noise until officials continue to see their performance from the frame of merely collecting and forwarding data. Ultimately a data management system is of use only when it is linked to a **change in work culture** – from a perception that my performance is linked to my ability to respond to data, to where performance is measured as "responsiveness" to data.

1. *Fixing roles and responsibilities clearly*

Expansion in autonomy must also be accompanied with greater clarity in and a re-distribution of roles and responsibilities within the administrative machinery to ensure that those that are tasked with specific roles and responsibilities have the authority and the resources to carry them out. For instance, as the report shows, administrative systems that are currently in place for SSA implementation, create muddled hierarchies and obfuscate accountability systems. DEOs are tasked with teacher monitoring but have little or no financial authority to penalize an errant *shiksha karmi,* who falls under the purview of the CEO, Zilla Parishad. Similarly, headmasters, block and district education officers routinely express helplessness and an inability to monitor any civil works activity in schools as payments are directly made by the State government to construction agencies, or panchayats that are effectively outside the purview of monitoring by the education department. While in principle, involving panchayats is good for the purposes of decentralization, and systems have been put in place to hold them accountable (through SMCs), our data suggest that SMCs do not work and are not participatory.

2. *Strengthening capacity at lower levels*

The State must invest in strengthening capacity at lower levels. The survey finds that all officials did not visit the institutions they were required to monitor, be it the anganwadi center or a school. The gaps were most evident in the case of supervisors, who play a key role in monitoring anganwadi activities. Since the study only used monitoring registers to report on this gap, it is hard to tell whether AWCs or schools receiving a personal visit by officials were being monitored at all. Nonetheless, the infrequency of visits is too evident to warrant attention.

[118] In a similar study of MDM in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar which used an IVRM call system to report daily on MDM, district officials in UP shared that if a school is unable to serve their meals for over three days, officials responsible for monitoring the meal at the Block level must visit the school to investigate the problem.

Qualitative interviews suggest that poor state capacity may also be one reason behind poor monitoring. Lack of human resources was a particular problem in the case of the WCD department, where nearly 61% of the CDPO posts lied vacant. In addition, interviews at the district office suggested that the department needed more computer operators to be able to codify the data gathered from anganwadis, analyze it, and accordingly make district plans. In the education department, similarly, MDM was an additional responsibility for already overworked officials. Those who did end up in the field complained of not being reimbursed for their transportation expenses. Finally, monitoring visits were seen, largely, as a check-in-the-box exercise without feedback loops or follow-up. Often times, lower level officials such as supervisors who visited anganwadis or cluster level officials who visited schools, had no response to grievances like salary delays, or delays in receipt of cooking costs, except refer it to higher ranked officers in the districts.

These findings lead us to suggest that small reforms in institutional design e.g. a **robust feedback loop or fixing accountabilities across the system**, could improve monitoring and create a sense of ownership among frontline officials. Other changes such as increasing technical, financial and human capacities at the frontline are equally important. **Training of officials monitoring the immediate frontline** can also go a long way. For example, experiments led by district governments in Bihar and Haryana show that when these officers are trained and made responsible for supporting and mentoring teachers, the gains can be significant.

To summarise therefore, we recommend a two-pronged approach to reform. First, an overall reform of the public finance management system where it is not the "push" by authorities above but a "pull" by expenditure units below that move funds within the system. This must be done to the most decentralized levels possible with every level being granted the authority to "draw" funds within pre-specified expenditure limits defined on the basis of its allocations. This will not only ensure that delays in payments are taken care of but also introduce transparency in payments. This enhancement in transparency needs to be accompanied by greater autonomy at the district-level by giving district block grants which they may spend on the basis of their priorities. However, a district will be able to truly understand its priorities (and may be held accountable to them) once bottom up planning is strengthened and is used to collate ground-level needs which can be communicated to higher administrative authorities. For this, data management systems at all levels need to be improved; data need to be collected in a manner so that data are useful; and finally a work culture needs to be put in place that encourages use of data to respond to field level challenges. Roles and responsibilities at all levels of government must also be reviewed and bureaucrat responsibilities must be brought in line with authority and resources available to them.