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INDIA

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)

FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION

(24 January - 7 February, 2005)

Aide Memoire

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**1. Introduction**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a comprehensive and integrated flagship programme of Government of India, to attain Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in the country in a mission mode. Launched in partnership with the State Governments, SSA aims to provide useful and relevant education to all children in the age group of 6-14 age by 2010. It is an initiative to universalise and improve the quality of education through decentralised and context specific planning and a process-based, time-bound implementation strategy. Its goal is consistent with the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment (2002), making elementary education a fundamental right of every child and with the Millenium Development Goal (MDG) of univeralising primary education by 2015.

The three development objectives of the project are as follows:

- (i) To reduce out of school children by at least 9 million in the 6-14 age group, with an increase in enrolment, in the process of univeralising elementary education by 2007.
- (ii) To narrow existing gender and social gaps so that enrolment of girls will be near parity with boys, enrolment of children of-SC and ST will be near parity with that of other groups; and enrolment of children with disability will increase.
- (iii) To increase the quality of education of all elementary school students so that learning will be improved and transition rates from primary education to upper primary education will increase.

SSA is a national programme largely resourced through national resources, supplemented by external funding from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), United Kingdom's International Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Commission (EC). As per the Agreements, the GOI and Development Partners (DP) will carry out a Joint Review Mission (JRM) twice a year.

The First Joint Review Mission of SSA was held from 24<sup>th</sup> January to 7<sup>th</sup> of February, 2005. The main objective of the JRM was to review progress in the implementation of the program with respect to the three development objectives, look at processes being adopted to achieve the development outcomes of SSA and to review state and district specific strategies being adopted that underpin the impact of the programme. A review of Financial Management and Procurement (FMP) was a part of the JRM. (Details of ToR at Annex 1)

The Mission comprising of twenty members (Annex 2) visited 16 districts in 8 selected states, held detailed discussions with various functionaries at state, district and sub-district levels, visited schools and other institutions like CRCs, BRCs, DIETs and SCERTs. It studied various

reports and documents and observed processes in the classrooms, in the community and other resource institutions to arrive at an understanding on the pace and quality of programme implementation. The Mission places on record its deep appreciation of the cooperation, coordination and cordial facilitation extended by the Department of Elementary Education, MIRD, Government of India, the Technical Support Group, State Government Officials, Project Officers and their teams. It acknowledges the helpful secretariat support received from the EdCIL team.

## **2. The Evolving Shape of the Mission Possible:**

**An overview of processes, promising pathways and possible ways to improve quality and accelerate pace.**

Based on a weeklong tour in eight states of the country which have within them half of the country's 158 million elementary school students, the twenty members of the Mission have observed a number of interesting processes, gained insight into some possible future directions and ways in which the SSA's developmental mission goals can be reached in different parts of the country.

The Mission members discerned the following broad trends:

- 1) The program has generated considerable interest and commitment in all the states and has helped bring elementary education closer to the centre stage of development agenda. The political executive, the governmental functionaries, the departments of education are quite involved in giving a shape to this mission not only by implementation of programme components but also to mould the programme to suit the state-specific situations. Enrolment drives, learning achievement surveys, alternative learning situations like Bridge Courses, Shiksha Kendras serve to illustrate how the national framework has been adapted by the states.
- 2) The program has generated in the country an unprecedented awareness about education and the Mission witnessed a very intense school-community interface that might be the foundation for a sustained progression towards the mission's objective of providing quality education for all children. Whether it is positioning additional teachers, or building better, bigger school buildings or aiding teaching - learning materials or participating in PTA meetings, the community participation in school development has quite visibly increased. This has led to a number of positive developments. The enrolments have gone up, attendance of students and teachers has improved, school buildings look better, seem better maintained and the accountability in the system is greatly enhanced.
- 3) SSA has significantly improved access to schooling. The flexible, decentralised, contextualised approach has helped establish schools in remote areas and for hitherto unreached populations. Setting up EGS centres in deep forests, isolated islands and hilly terrains has changed the socio-cultural matrix of many communities. The Mission members noted many instances where these EGS centres brought about a change in the world-view of tribal groups. The programme has also brought forth a dedicated group of educated youth who are acting as instructors in these interior centres. Their knowledge of culture, language

and the social mores of the communities; has helped establish a rapport with the group of learners resulting in enrolment of a large number of first generation learners.

- 4) The programme has helped the states to develop strategies for enrolling children in schools. It is gratifying to note that in the eight states visited by the Mission, the number of out-of-school children which was around 12 million in January 2003 (as per the household survey conducted by the states) had been dramatically reduced to 3 million in two years time. Opening of new schools, EGS centres, ECCE facilities, bridge courses have brought education facilities closer to communities. Most states visited by the Mission reported near universal access. The first major step towards fulfillment of the SSA's first development objective has been taken.
- 5) The SSA framework has helped focus on staffing of schools. More teachers have been recruited in all the states visited by the mission and barring a few exceptions like West Bengal, the Pupil-Teacher ratios are approaching a manageable level of 40 students per teacher.
- 6) The programme has created an environment where school processes are being more closely looked at. Excellent teaching-learning materials have been developed by institutions by groups of teachers as well as by individual teachers. Schools are becoming more child-friendly and teachers are increasingly becoming aware of the efficacy of child-centred, activity-based pedagogy. Textbooks and workbooks, supplementary teaching-learning materials are being developed across all the states visited by the mission.
- 7) All states visited by the mission are addressing the issue of uneven access to quality education. Conscious of gender and social gaps, interventions like remedial instruction, residential schools, vocational skill development, uniforms and mid-day meals have been introduced in most of the states. The gaps exist but are narrowing and if states sustain the current focussed, strategic approach we may soon achieve the second development objective of SSA. However, much more needs to be done in this component.
- 8) The SSA framework has enabled existing teacher training institutions to be strengthened and new resource institutions like BRC and CRC to be set up. **Teacher training, as a part of building capacity to initiate and sustain education reforms, has become an integral part of the planning process. The process of upgrading teachers professional skills is now universal in place.** There are, of course, issues of quality of content and training methodology which impinge on the confidence and competence levels of teachers and ultimately on the quality of classroom transaction.
- 9) SSA has also brought in greater convergence between various programmes and the states are beginning to view schemes like Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), total sanitation and water supply as crucial inputs to the larger Mission of EFA.
- 10) SSA has brought together an increasing number of NGOs and civil society partners into a collaborative relationship. Wider participation based on a shared vision and commitment to mission goals is perhaps the most crucial factor that can ensure sustainability of the national endeavor.

This broad brush picture of SSA merely describes the contours of a promising mission. There are a number of excellent initiatives taken by the states in the field that have been adumbrated in the

sac reports. There are quite a few areas that need sharper focus and concerted action. The Mission would like to highlight some of the more significant ones that could help improve the pace and quality of implementation.

- (1) Data collection, data analysis and data use are crucial for measuring progress lending the mission a sense of direction. Disaggregated data can help identify gaps that need to be closed and lead to more focussed attention on the disadvantaged, marginalized groups. While a lot of data is being periodically collected, some of it remains inadequately used for planning or monitoring purposes. It would be crucial to evolve a data management system where data collected are accurate and are effectively used, for instance, for bringing more out-of-school children into school, including children with special needs, for tracking attendance and identifying children who are at risk of dropping out, for prioritizing the construction of school buildings.
- (2) Aligning all activities to the Mission goals is central to accelerating the pace and effectiveness of implementation process. Textbooks, workbooks, teacher handbooks, teaching-learning materials, teacher-orientation, pupil-evaluation must be seen as parts of a larger canvas that has the child at the centre. Creating quality learning environment, learning opportunities and facilitating better learning outcomes through child-centred teaching-learning processes must be seen as the central purpose of all our endeavors.
- (3) With gross enrolment ratios reaching 100% level, the attention must shift to attendance and prevention of dropout.
- (4) The classroom processes hold the key for retention of children and therefore need greater understanding and effort to make them qualitatively better. Concepts like increasing the time-on-task, engagement time, participatory, activity-based, active-learning, multi-grade teaching / learning, where required, may have to be internalised by the teachers. We need to enable teachers to become instructional, transformational leaders.
- (5) The Mission feels that considerable work remains to be done to build capacity in the system in all key areas with the view to improving learning outcomes for all. This should, for example, focus on enabling the teachers to improve teaching in a way that facilitates all students to learn at a high level of proficiency. More creative, multiple modes of assessment rather than a standardized test would be desirable. Having a system to measure learning outcomes would facilitate hardspot analysis, provision of remedial education, and measurement of academic progress.
- (6) Administrative procedures must be reviewed to facilitate entry and retention of children in school dismantling various barriers.
- (7) Civil Works, which absorbs about one-third of SSA funding, must be treated as an integral part of the learning environment. Well designed and maintained schools will provide flexible space for teaching and learning activities, and raise students' interest in attending school until they complete a given cycle. Thus, it is very important to pay attention to context-specific school building design, and plan and implement civil works through a holistic approach. Progress of review and renewal of pre-SSA building designs (in all DPEP states) as well as development of a pool of new designs in all SSA schools must be continued. The pace of implementation should be quickened.

**3. Objective 1: To reduce out of school children by at least 9 million in the 6-4 age group with an increase in enrollment in the process of universalizing elementary education.**

**3.1 Status and progress:**

3.1.1 All states visited by the Joint Review Mission have made very good progress in implementing SSA with respect to increasing children's enrollment in schools. There is ample evidence to suggest that these States are moving fast towards near full access in terms of children being in school and schools in every habitation. Expansion of access to children of all groups and habitations has been done primarily through building new schools, expanding existing schools by adding classrooms and by spreading the net of EGS and AIEAS centers.

3.1.2 Most recently available figures that were shared by state governments with the Mission indicate that there are: 625,000 children out of school in Madhya Pradesh, 151,000 in Uttar Pradesh, 373,000 in Maharashtra, 1.414 million in West Bengal, 64,997 in Punjab, 210,000 in Tamil Nadu, 236,000 in Orissa and only 6,000 in Tripura. Based on available data and discussions at state, district, block, cluster and village levels, there is evidence of significant increase in enrollment in all states as well as reduction in numbers of out of school children. Data are of variable quality.

3.1.3 Key to achieving universalization in elementary education are schools and teachers. The opening of new schools and addition of new classrooms have played an important part in expanding schooling facilities to children. There is evidence of close to universal access of primary schools in most states. Wherever there are gaps, the gaps are known at village block and district levels and plans are underway. (The teacher issue is addressed in a later section.)

3.1.4 In this respect, the Mission was concerned about West Bengal. The state currently has a policy of not opening new schools. The state also has decided not to open any new alternative primary schools (Shishu Shiksha Kendras) or new alternative upper primary schools. Therefore upgrading alternative schools (SSKs) as well as upper primary schools continues to be an urgent issue. Enrolling the remaining out of school children into existing regular schools and alternative schools will lead to overcrowding and higher student teacher ratios and is likely to impede the quality of education.

**3.2. Identification of out of school children, data and measurement issues**

3.2.1. States carry out periodic household surveys at the habitation level to identify out of school children. In many cases, these surveys are carried out annually with participation of school teachers, students, WECs and others. Village Education Registers were found in most schools that were visited by the Mission with varying quality. Household Surveys have been useful in identifying out of school children and providing reasons for why they are out of school. The quality and consistency of data on out-of-school children however remains an issue.

3.2.2. Gross and net enrollment ratios in all states visited by the Mission are high. However, calculation of comparable age-specific enrollment ratios may be useful in tracking progress of

children's enrollment. In planning ahead, data issues need more careful analysis all at levels. The 2001 census figures for child population disaggregated by age groups is available for children at the district level and could be used as a common reference point.

3.2.3 All states have data for in-school children and out of school children from habitation household surveys. They also have enrollment data from formal schools and alternative schools every year. The timing of the household survey varies across states: some states conduct surveys annually, others do so periodically. Some states conduct household surveys in the summer months. Enrollment figures from schools are usually collected after the first few months of the school year. At habitation, cluster, block and district level it is important to routinely cross check the in-school children figures being generated from the household surveys and from the school based information systems. Focus is needed to make sure that the data on enrollment in EGS, AIE/AS, CBSE schools and private schools is complete and accurate in DISE. Availability of DISE data on time is critical for the planning process for the subsequent year.

3.2.4 Identification and reporting of the numbers of out of school children is essential for planning and reaching universal enrollment. In this context, data on children not yet enrolled and due to enter Std I at the start of the coming school year should be reported separately from out-of-school children (e.g. never enrolled children or children who have dropped out) who are 7 and older.

### 3.3 Strategies, processes and interventions:

3.3.1 Following SSA guidelines, multi-pronged strategies are being followed in all states to bring out-of-school children into the education system. These include building new schools and classrooms, conducting enrollment drives, back-to-school camps and spreading the net of EGS and AIE/AS centres including a variety of residential and non-residential bridge courses. These initiatives are more effective when implemented with the active participation of the community, VECs, PTAs/MTAs and in partnership with NGOs and local bodies. SSA's ability to support and upgrade ECCE schemes into pre-primary schools proves a very effective pathway for enhancing and sustaining access to primary education particularly in underserved areas and among traditionally less school-friendly communities.

3.3.2 Efforts made in enrollment campaigns and community mobilization drives are clearly effective in bringing about substantial short term jumps in the number of children enrolled but many of these will quickly drop out in the absence of longer term community engagement. Active engagement by PTAs, class friends, VEC, MTA etc has been a key factor in keeping children in school. Such strategies need to be strongly encouraged, supported and reinforced at the village level.

3.3.3 For "durable mainstreaming" of children especially older children (who have never been enrolled in school or are dropouts) from alternative schools into regular schools, there are several key areas that need to be strengthened. First, "accelerated learning" techniques are needed to build strong academic preparation for successful entry of such children into regular schools. Second, keeping in mind local context and conditions, integration of such groups from EGS/AIE/AS into formal schools needs to be planned in advance. Third, recently mainstreamed

children need continued support to ensure daily attendance in school as well as guaranteed support for continued learning. The EGS/AIE/AS instructor who helped to bring the children into the mainstream is best poised to help the children stay in school. Without the extra help they are likely to drop out. Tracking studies of the mainstreamed children on a sample basis could be taken up at the block level.

3.3.4 The provision of upper primary schooling opportunities is improving in most states. The SSA norm for the desired ratio of upper primary to primary schools is 1:2. These ratios need to be tracked by cluster to prioritize allocations. At times, establishment of new schools does not go hand in hand with commensurate and timely recruitment and appointment of additional teachers. Advance planning is needed to ensure effective transition from primary to upper primary schools. The “catchment” area of upper primary schools need to be mapped by cluster. In some states, there is widespread availability of private schools at the upper primary level. A local understanding of the role of the private sector provision needs to be factored into the planning process of upper primary schools.

3.3.5 All states attempt to have universal enrollment at the beginning of the school year. As we look ahead, effective strategies need to be developed at local levels to translate high enrollment into high attendance through the year. This is one of the key challenges of SSA. Regular tracking of attendance urgently needs to get underway and become the focus of attention in terms of programme target setting.

3.3.6 None of the Mission teams in any of the states commented in any detail on the issues of access in urban areas, especially in the larger cities. This area needs urgent attention in subsequent review missions.

**4. Objective 2: To narrow existing gender and social gaps so that enrolment of girls will be near parity with boys, enrolment of children of SC/ST will be near parity with that of other groups, and enrolment of children with disabilities will increase.**

4.1 The focus of attention has thus far has been on extending coverage to ensure all children are enrolled, regardless of gender, caste or locality. The mission feels that there is now an opportunity to further widen the understanding of disparity (or gaps) to include a greater consideration of the quality of the education experienced by the special focus groups and to extend the focus on greater equity beyond the set of specific interventions to ensure all interventions benefit children equally.

4.2 *Girls' education.* All states are reporting increases in the enrolment of girls and a narrowing of the gap between boys' and girls' enrolment. At the primary level the enrolment of girls as a percentage of total enrolment is now typically above 47%, with Punjab reporting more girls than boys enrolled and Tamil Nadu reporting higher primary completion rates by girls. The Mission noted significantly low gender ratio in the general population in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. The picture at upper primary level is of more concern, with states reporting decreased participation of girls, which becomes more pronounced at higher grade levels.



4.3 The increase in girls participation has been brought about by a number of strategies: enrolment drives and community sensitisation to identify out of school children with an emphasis on girls and advocating the imperatives of educating the girl child. Important groups, such as Mother Teacher Associations, have been constituted in many areas. In addition to improving access of girls to regular and alternative schools, bridge courses and residential camps, often run in partnership with NGOs, have been used in many states to reach girls who have previously failed to enrol.

4.4 Whilst the overall, aggregate trend is positive, there remains within States, areas and groups where girls' enrolment is more problematic. The National Programme for the Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL), initiated in 2003, provides additional resources to target the most backward blocks. Madhya Pradesh has made creative use of the funds to provide free uniform to all girls in the state. Implementation has however been uneven across states and this potentially important programme should be given higher priority at all levels in terms of resource allocation and mobilisation. The newly initiated *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyaya* scheme of providing residential schools for girls is an further example of the intent to continue to introduce new strategies to overcome geographical, economic and social barriers. Again, implementation of this programme should be afforded high priority.

4.5 The mission feels that in addition to sustaining and accelerating where necessary these supply side interventions, greater emphasis could be placed on developing innovative strategies to address the demand side constraints to improved girls' participation. Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal have undertaken recent studies that identify some of the underlying causes of girls' failure to enrol in or attend school. These point again to known factors of which domestic work and sibling care are significant. The development of compensatory measures to directly address these issues will ultimately reduce the needs for special supply-side measures and ensure all girls can attend 'normal' day schools. Madhya Pradesh's use of cash incentives, through the Tribal Development Department, for vulnerable girls is noteworthy. The expansion of ECCE, particularly in poorer areas equally compensates for sibling care.

4.6 The number of female teachers within teacher cadres varies greatly from state to state, from 12% in Tripura to 70% in Tamil Nadu. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have made progress in increasing the number of female teachers. It is unclear from this mission the extent to which other states positively discriminate in favour of women in selection and recruitment processes, or attempt to overcome some of the known inhibitors faced by women in taking up teaching (e.g travel, child care).

4.7 *SC/ST/minorities.* All states are also reporting improvements in the participation of children of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), with cases (e.g. Punjab) where participation rates exceed their respective representation in the population. This phenomenon may ultimately prove to be the norm as free state provision becomes universal and private schooling remains outside the financial resources of these groups. Comprehensive and consistent data from all eight visited states was not available to this mission; this will be available to the next mission to enable a more definitive picture of progress. Reporting for other minorities (Other Backward Castes (OBC) and Muslims) is less routine and needs to be strengthened. States have developed a range of actions noted by the Mission. Free textbook distribution to

these groups appears the norm in most states and remedial programmes have been introduced to improve learning. Notwithstanding this clearly positive trend, a number of states report remaining concerns. Gaps in completion rates persist in Tamil Nadu and Orissa reports a widening of gaps at the upper primary level. Learning levels of SC and ST children are also reported lower than the norm in Uttar Pradesh.

4.8 In many states, the most significant factor in bringing more of these children into schools has been the development and expansion of EGS/AIE centres which predominantly serve poorer communities. The importance of these centres cannot be overstated in reducing formidable barriers to access. There is some evidence (much anecdotal) that these alternative centres offer a learning experience comparable to, and often better than, that offered in the formal system (teacher presence and regularity of teaching being the most oft stated), and this has been significantly enhanced by ensuring greater equity of provision of resources including grants, textbooks, and teacher support and training. In other respects these centres do not always compare favourably with formal schools, particularly with regard to basic infrastructure, and the programme of upgrading being pursued in a number of States (eg. Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal) needs to be sustained if a more comprehensive degree of equity is to prevail across the entire schooling system. Unless carefully planned and managed, SSA may through its resources for civil works exacerbate rather than reduce these inequities. The Mission recommends that greater vigilance is maintained with regard to planning and resource allocations to ensure that these centres that serve much of the SC/ST populations are put on a par with regular schools.

4.9 In order to assure improved learning for girls, SC and ST children, SSA provides for free textbooks. Most states are reporting 100% coverage under this scheme, though the practice and experience in West Bengal suggests otherwise. For this provision to translate into learning outcomes, textbooks need to be distributed at the start of the school year. Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh appear exemplary in this regard. The Mission's visit to Tripura raises the issue of language with regard to tribal children. Previous DPEP JRM's have raised this issue and, given the impact on learning outcomes made by differences between mother tongue, the language of instruction in the classroom and the language of the textbook, some serious consideration needs to be given to this issue.

4.10 The development of innovative strategies for greater inclusion of girls and SC/ST children relies on appropriate utilisation of the innovation funds available under SSA. A comparison of reported utilisation against allocations under these sub-heads indicates a very low, and in some cases, no take up of these activities. Greater attention could be paid to the opportunity these funds afford to develop more locally responsive approaches to augment the more major elements of the programme.

4.11 *Inclusive Education of the Disabled (IED)*. All states have undertaken extensive screening exercises to identify children with special needs (CWSN) and make efforts to integrate them into schools through special camps, for children and parents, teacher training and civil works (particularly ramps) to ensure school environments are disabled-friendly. However, better integration of civil works with IED is needed at the field level. Convergence with other Government Departments and strong links with NGOs are reported in many states. Whilst invariably improving, coverage remains incomplete and an examination of the physical and

financial progress reported by States thus far for the current year shows implementation to be poor, suggesting that this area is not receiving sufficient priority. Interventions reported tend to follow a medical model with attention to providing aids and appliances to physically challenged children. Whilst this is an essential part of IED, the mission feels that emphasis also needs to be placed on the social dimension of disability, with increased attention to both in-school and home-based support for learning.

4.12 It is therefore recommended that special efforts to accelerate the development of specialised expertise and capacity on inclusive education in all States, both through promoting inter-State collaboration between the few lead States, such as Tamil Nadu, and other States as well as through international exchange of experience and exposure.

**5. Objective 3: To enhance the quality of education for all primary school students so that learning will be improved and transition rates from primary and upper primary education will increase.**

5.1 The state reports reflect a broad consensus around the need to improve teaching and learning processes. This is consistently seen as the most important challenge in the drive toward universal primary education. There is also significant agreement as to the strategies that will lead to better teaching and learning. These can be placed into three broad categories: (i) the overall environment in which teaching and learning takes place, (ii) the teaching and learning processes themselves, and (iii) the systemic mechanisms in support of teaching and learning.

The teaching and learning environment

5.2 Perhaps the most striking feature of the state reports is the consistent effort under SSA to extend teaching and learning opportunities to previously marginalized or excluded children. This means that primary schooling is now occurring in a much more differentiated environment than in the past, with large numbers of students attending one-room EGS, AIE centres, and bridge courses of various durations. While multigrade teaching has long been a feature of education systems in India, the reports highlight growing stresses due largely to high pupil-teacher ratios.

Pupil-teacher ratio

5.3 Under SSA, the norm for the pupil-teacher ratio is set at 40. The achievement of this norm will require sustained efforts from many states. There is clear evidence of significant movement in this direction. In Uttar Pradesh, in spite of increasing enrollments, PTR has declined from 66:1 to 52:1 over the course of the past year. This decline has been made possible by the recruitment of 100,000 teachers, including 55,000 para-teachers. There are also worrisome countertrends. In West Bengal, PTR at the primary level has declined from 62:1 to 51:1 over the past three years, but PTR in upper primary only schools has risen from 79:1 to 88:1. Several reports also note that the focus on average PTR may present an inaccurate picture of overall conditions, since the distribution of PTR varies widely. In Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, for instance, the average PTR is close to SSA norms but many schools have classes that are well below or well above this norm. It is recommended that states not only track average PTR, but also the number of schools and classrooms with a PTR significantly above this norm, with implementation of policies for teacher posting to minimize variation in PTR.

### Physical environment

5.4 The physical environment of schools is generally characterized as good, but not good enough, with significant variations by state. The Tripura team reports that many classrooms lack even such basic requirements as blackboards, and that charts and maps are not accessible to children. In Maharashtra, there is a state-wide effort to improve the school environment through provision of drinking water and toilet facilities, but many children are still sitting on bare floors.

### Teaching and learning processes

5.5 Classroom processes must lead to durable learning outcomes. Four elements characterize the reports on teaching and learning. First, there is wide agreement that teaching should be, but is not, more child-centered. Second, there is agreement on the need for greater results focus, with clear and specific learning targets. Third, most states report good progress in provision of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials, while expressing concerns regarding relevance and content. Reading books are generally much less available. And finally, there is a consistent call for increased learning time. Surprisingly, in spite of a spate of recent reports about teacher absenteeism, this was not flagged as a problem.

### Multi-grade teaching

5.6 Many of the reports on classroom transactions highlight the particular challenge of working in a multi-grade environment. It is noted that in Madhya Pradesh, multi-grade classes are essentially operating as parallel mono-grade classes, with each of two or three groups being taught in turns, with loss of time and no interaction among groups. In Punjab as well multi-grade teaching does not appear to be addressing the special needs of heterogeneous classroom groups. The Orissa report notes that "effective multi-grade teaching is rarely visible". Yet multi-grade classrooms offer opportunities for teachers to develop cross-age peer tutoring and other peer support approaches to teaching which can accelerate learning. The development of such skills should be a feature of training and support programmes.

### Teaching and learning materials

5.7 The provision of textbooks and teaching and learning materials is widely seen as successful, and the distribution of textbooks to girls and SC/ST children appears to have been managed effectively. Teachers have developed materials with the support of block and cluster resource centers. However, many of these teaching learning materials are intended for visual display and may be pedagogically of limited value. Materials that are designed for handling and manipulation by the children themselves will contribute more to enhanced learning. There is also a concern about the opportunity cost of spending significant teacher development time in the design of materials rather than the improvement of pedagogic practices. States such as Orissa have developed activity-based textbooks and are making supplementary reading materials available. The Meena Manch program for girls has created enthusiasm for reading, with many girls indicating they frequently read books for pleasure. Similar opportunities should be made available to all children.

### Time on task

5.8 Several factors contribute to reducing actual learning time in the classroom. In many states, student absenteeism is high. In the schools observed in Uttar Pradesh, student attendance

averaged only about 70%, and much lower on many days. A particular challenge for Tripura is to increase teaching time in Standards 1 and 2 above the current allocation of 2 hours, 15 minutes daily. Many teachers also must care for younger siblings of students, further reducing time for teaching. It is proposed that a review of time on task be conducted, both as a way of better understanding the scope of the issue and as a way of sensitizing teachers, head teachers and administrators to the importance of maximizing learning time and actively seeking solutions.

#### Learning to learn

5.9 Examples of good practice emerged during the state visits. The Integrated Learning Improvement Programme in West Bengal covers about 8% of schools, with evaluations showing a positive impact on both attendance and learning. A quality improvement program in Maharashtra called Rajarshi Sahu Sarvangin Shikshan Karyakram has developed an incentives system for high-performing schools. Several positive examples of teaching in EGS or AIE centers were noted. Many of the bridge courses, however, appear to use rote learning approaches based on memorization of facts. These programs should be rebuilt around problem-solving and creativity so that children are given the tools to continue learning after placement into regular classes at age-appropriate grade level, and that additional support be given to these children after integration into regular classes.

#### Systemic support for teaching and learning

5.10 Several elements are widely cited as particular needs in terms of system-wide support for teaching and learning: better pre- and in-service teacher education and development, consistent instructional leadership within schools and districts, and better information about student learning achievement.

#### Pre- and in-service teacher education

5.11 Teacher education in all states varies greatly according to the teacher category.. Para-teachers typically receive far less initial training than regular teachers—often as little as ten days. Training opportunities for EGS / AIE instructors need to be expanded to enable them to face the most complex teaching challenges. Both pre-service and in-service teacher education are hampered by a lack of personnel in the teacher training institutions and by an almost exclusive top-down approach to training, with little input from the teachers themselves. Needs-based training programs observed did not appear to have sufficiently included teachers in the determination of needs. While states such as Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and others are placing a high priority on training of teachers and head teachers, it is strongly recommended that such training include demand-side approaches and a philosophy of teachers as reflective practitioners. It is further recommended that states develop a framework for knowledge management, giving explicit attention to the inflow and circulation of new ideas from applied research, as well as examples of best practice from other states and countries.

#### Pedagogic support

5.12 Few states gave evidence of successful practice in terms of developing and supporting leadership around pedagogic issues at the school and cluster level. In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, cluster and block personnel make frequent visits to schools, but these are almost entirely for administrative purposes. These visits provide a potential platform for increasing instructional support. The current grading system for schools could be reconceptualized to provide a further

tool to this end. It is also recommended that guidelines be developed for classroom visits by block and cluster resource personnel and by head teachers in support of improved instruction.

### Assessment

5.13 There is clear need for better school or district-level evaluation of student learning, as well as for an assessment system to make information about student learning routinely available, and to allow individual states and districts to track learning trends. Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa conduct statewide assessments of student learning. Madhya Pradesh has introduced monthly, quarterly and annual student assessment in every grade for every child to provide the basis of evaluating student learning outcomes and of providing remedial support. Student performance is disaggregated by gender, SC, ST, OBC, and general. This allows BIC, Jan Shikshaks, teachers and PTAs to see the pattern of achievement and compare them among groups, and across schools, clusters, blocks, and districts. Students and schools with weaker performance receive special remedial support. Pupil evaluations are shared with PTA on a regular basis by the school teachers. Board examination results at standards 5 and 8 of each constituency are presented to the legislative assembly as an accountability measure. There are few examples of monitorable state-specific learning targets at the various grade levels.

## **6. Governance**

The eight states visited by the Mission represent a wide variety. One reason is that some states had an experience of organizing their activities in a mission mode, thanks to the earlier District Primary Education Programme. Others, like Punjab and Tripura came into the SSA without the benefit of being through the experience of DPEP. More importantly, there is a need to recognize the distinction between the states in terms of their overall approach to decentralization. States like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tripura which have a vibrant and strong third tier of local governance are therefore more attuned to the kind of decentralized governance that is a hallmark of SSA. States like Punjab which have neither a history of strong local government institutions nor some experience with working in a mission mode are obviously in a different stage of evolution.

In what follows, issues of governance are discussed under the following heads for ease of reporting and analysis: Personnel Issues, Institutions and Management Structures, Monitoring (including research) and Civil Works.

### **6.1 Personnel Issues**

The concern here is most importantly with adequacy of personnel, in terms of numbers to fill all positions. This concern is for both teaching personnel as well as administrative staff. While most states have managed to fill staff positions, many continue to report large number of vacant positions of teachers. This number is sizeable in Punjab (over 21000), Maharashtra (over 12000) and Tripura (over 1200), West Bengal and Orissa. There is no clear indication that these positions are likely to be filled in the near future. The number of vacancies is growing every year due to retirements and it is difficult to see how states will fulfill the condition of maintaining education sector investments at 1999-2000 levels without filling vacancies which have come up since then. States with a large number of teacher vacancies are at risk of losing out on SSA support if the pre-requisite referred to above is not met.

States have done better in filling up positions of project staff, both at the state level and the district level, the exceptions being Orissa where a fifth of the staff positions at the district level is vacant and Maharashtra, where clerical cadres in Finance Branch have not been filled up fully. The experience however is mixed as far as the sub-district level is concerned, especially in respect of staff for academic support. In many states, the resource persons at the Block and Cluster levels are either not available in sufficient numbers or are unable to provide academic support. West Bengal has recruited a large number of retired teachers, which may not be the most appropriate approach. Punjab has picked up young teachers as Block Resource Persons but their role is limited to administrative support and information collection. Most states would benefit from more awareness building among all levels of staff, both district and sub-district levels. As has been aptly stated elsewhere in a state report, "there is a need to make all staff understand their social component across mission components."

### 3.2 Institutions and Management Structures

We would like to include institutions within and outside the state structure in our comments because no *Abhiyan* on *Sarva Shiksha* can be sustained unless government and civil society work together. Within government institutions, there are those like the SCERT and the DIETs which have a very direct role in enhancing the quality of the teaching learning process through teacher training and pedagogical renewal and promoting innovations. Unfortunately, in most states, the DIETs are still not developed enough or equipped enough to perform their supportive roles. In some states, like West Bengal and Tripura, DIETs do not exist in all districts. The role of SCERT, and the extent of its coordinated support to the program, varies widely from state to state: with Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra at one end of the spectrum with complete coordination, to Punjab where there is very little coordination between SSA and SCERT. With the exception of Uttar Pradesh, none of the other seven states which are a part of this report have established a SIEMAT, though it is reported that West Bengal is contemplating setting up one.

Perhaps an even more crucial aspect is the network of support from civil society. It is heartening to note that some states like Tamil Nadu have built effective networks with civil society and NGOs. The supportive roles of such institutions especially in the area of inclusive education for those with disabilities can be held out as a model for others. Most states need to make greater efforts in eliciting the support of institutions outside government because of the diverse talent and resources that can be leveraged to support the SSA through their efforts.

The real distinguishing feature of SSA which cannot be compromised in any way is its decentralized approach epitomized in the institution at the village level, referred to by various names like VEC, VEDC and Parent-Teacher Association (Madhya Pradesh), etc. It is the most heartening feature of this Mission's experience that in all states, they are active and interested and are contributing immensely to SSA. In two states, (Punjab and Tripura) there is a concern that civil works are going to be entrusted to other agencies for administrative convenience. However, the benefits of executing civil works through VECs / PTA far outweigh the possible administrative benefits of getting a state agency to undertake the works. This Mission strongly recommends that the existing practice of entrusting civil works to VECs/PTAs should be continued in all states.

In many states, VECs/PTA have been playing a very mature role in such areas as school management, bottom up planning and even financial support. States like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are perhaps at a stage where there can be an attempt at 'whole school planning and budgeting' rather than the present component wise planning and programme implementation. The ultimate goal being decentralized elementary education, as is also reflected by the specific mention of this subject in the annexure of the 74th Constitutional Amendment. Perhaps the time has come to make a beginning in this direction.

### 6.3.3 Monitoring and Research

Under SSA, a number of independent agencies have been identified in each state for monitoring. These are usually academic institutions. However, not much monitoring appears to have taken place in most states and few such reports are available. There is a need to look afresh at the issue. Similarly, in some states like Punjab and West Bengal, the state level research committees which are expected to set a research agenda, are yet to be set up or activated. There is a need for concerted effort on this so that those implementing the SSA can profit from the wide expertise available in such institutions at the state level. There is a need to apply clearer direction and consistency to independent monitoring so that the reports yield timely and reliable information on progress and support improved internal monitoring by states and districts.

### 6.4 Civil Works

There is a need to strengthen and improve quality control overall in respect of civil work. Moreover, though there have been impressive gains in terms of addition of infrastructure, the pace of construction needs to be stepped up for quicker completion of civil works. Many states evolved good practices in this respect which should be shared amongst states. For example, some states (Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra) have constructed schools and classrooms using context specific, innovative designs which have proved to be more child and learning friendly. This innovative design process should continue under SSA and capacity in the states to carry this forward should be strengthened.

### 6.5 Financial Management

The Mission visited 8 states of which 4 were selected for special review of financial management procedures.<sup>1</sup> A general review of the financial management however, was carried out by the JRM in other 4 states too. Following are the Mission's observations:

#### 6.5.1 Roll out of (Roadmap to) Financial Management and Procurement Manual

Most of the States reviewed by the Mission have taken steps to implement the FMP Manual. The Manual has been adopted for implementation by most states. Suitable orientation programmes have been arranged for State Project Office (SPO) staff and District Project Office (DPO) staff.

The Mission suggests that states should take the initiative to develop a suitable version of the FMP manual into local languages for the use of sub-district and VEC / PTA organizations who may have limitations in understanding it in English. This has already been done in some states.

<sup>1</sup> 4 states where financial experts were sent as part of JRM were:

Uttar Pradesh	--	Financial Expert : Mr. Rajeev Kapoor (DFID)
Orissa	--	Financial Expert : Mr. Tanuj Mathur (World Bank)
Tamil Nadu	--	Financial Expert and Procurement Expert : Mr. S.K. Bahl (World Bank)
Madhya Pradesh	--	Financial Expert : Mr. Vijay Kumar (GOI)



### **6.5.2 Fund Flow Arrangements**

For a variety of reasons funds have not flowed as per the prescribed calendar causing according to the states, slippage in programme achievements. A possible remedy could be that GOI may release funds to the state missions in April as 1st installment on the basis of the assessment of the states' performance in the previous year with suitable adjustment after the PAB approval.

The question of short release and delayed release of its share by State Government needs special attention, so does the practice of not crediting the share directly into the state mission bank account and routing it through the PD account with treasury as in Madhya Pradesh.

The need for timely fund flow at all levels can hardly be over emphasized Modern systems like e-transfers are being brought in a few states could be easily replicated in other states.

Fund flow from SPO to districts and sub-district levels below has shown great improvement, thanks to increasing use of electronic transfer system. However, the facilities for such transfers are not present everywhere, such states may take up on priority basis with appropriate banking authorities the issue of providing facilities for electronic transfer of funds. However, where such facilities do not exist, the funds to the sub-district level could be transferred through credit advises rather than through cheque / drafts (UP pattern).

The problem of transferring funds to district as well as sub-district office in multiple instalments is causing administrative and accounting overload. Ideally these funds should be transmitted in 2 or 3 tranches so as to enable the district and sub-district organizations to have a proper plan for execution during the year.

### **6.5.3 Accounting Arrangements**

Generally accounts keeping and maintenance of records is poor in sub-district offices, while SPO and DPO have shown good improvement in this matter. A proper system of record keeping must be put in place at VEC / PTA level and suitable training imparted at PTA level where nearly 88% of total funds are spent (Madhya Pradesh). Compliance of manual rules & provisions should be entrusted to the Official Member Secretary of the PTA / VEC. Uttar Pradesh should plan early shift to double entry system of book keeping.

It is necessary that prioritization of expenditure is done by the VEC / PTA especially in view of the fact that there are fund constraints. It is but natural that at the village level the VEC comprising of stakeholders representatives should have the authority to prioritize the expenditure within the limits imposed by AWP&B. Fund release letters should be marked to VEC / PTA chairman by the district SSA authority.

To improve timely production of Accounts and consequently of Audit Certification, states may take initiatives to computerize the SSA accounts up to the District level.

Staffing structure especially at district level in finance and accounts wing should conform to the staffing structure as per Para83 of the FMP Manual.

#### 6.5.4 Auditing Arrangements

##### Statutory Audit

- While the procedures laid down in FMP manual regarding appointment of statutory auditors is generally followed, the quality of reports suffers from many deficiencies including very general qualifications that do not convey much in specific terms to follow up. Audit Reports were also delayed and in some cases not even adopted by the Executive Committee.
- Generally statutory audit is being done at two levels, SPO level as well as district level. The ToR of the auditor needs to be reviewed specially with reference to the sample size for checking the sub-district office records. Preferably the number of such offices should be specified by the State Mission and their reports should form part of the audit report of the district.
- Another area where ToR needs to be reviewed is where more than one auditor is appointed with a lead auditor. The duties and functions of lead auditor should be defined in the ToR.

##### Internal Audit

Internal Audit is a weak area in most SIS. Outsourcing this to firms of CAs is being done now in some states to overcome the deficiency. But the follow-up of Audit Reports is a key factor since the advantages from internal auditing will be available only if a proper follow up is done. Internal audit can focus more on procurement aspects where the statutory audit is weak.

#### 6.5.5 Utilization of Grants

While funds provided under various interventions were used to a very large extent in some states, in some others, utilization was poor in respect of certain interventions like TLM, school grants and grants concerning research evaluation and monitoring. A pertinent question raised in the mission reports is the question of proper use of grants for the purpose for which these were given. It is also necessary that wider publicity of grants utilization is given by posting the same on the school boards and prominently in district offices for the information of the community.

#### 6.6 Procurement

The States / districts need to prepare and update their procurement plan so that progress can be monitored with respect to the targets.

The IPAI has done a test of the audit of procurement of goods, services and works in Punjab. The IPAI has agreed with GOI to carry out a procurement review of six states in 2005.

### 7. Key Recommendations

#### Access

- Quality and consistency of data on out of school children and enrolled children needs to be improved. Periodic checking and sample verification of data collection is important. The timely availability of DISE for program planning and implementation must be ensured.
- Participation of community members in household surveys, micro planning and in ensuring children's enrollment and attendance must be strengthened.
- Closer attention to "durable mainstreaming" needed in all programs that take children from alternative schools to formal schools.

- Effective strategies for translating high enrollment at the beginning of the school year into high attendance through the year need to be devised.
- Movement from government to private schools needs to be studied.
- Urgent attention needs to be paid to issues of access in urban areas and subsequent mission should look into this issue more closely.

### Equity

In order to develop a greater commitment to removing disparities that goes beyond basic access, the state, district and block should, as part of the AWP&B process, increase attention to the allocation and subsequent utilisation of resources, to ensure greater prioritisation of these special focus groups. In this way equity may be better mainstreamed across all project interventions. This should consider:

- Geographical targeting to areas with high population of special focus group
- Ensuring that each intervention (especially civil works, EGS/AIE, training, grants and innovation) better prioritise these groups.

In order to achieve this information, systems will need to be strengthened to more easily track all interventions in terms of the extent they target special focus groups. There should be a more serious and focused effort to meet the special learning needs of children with disabilities.

### Quality

Given the importance of both national-level monitoring of progress toward learning objectives, and state-level piloting of school improvement efforts, it is recommended that the overall architecture for sample-based assessment of student achievement be developed by GOI with state involvement and implementation. States would be encouraged to develop complementary state-specific testing consistent with the overall assessment framework.

### Governance

One of the lasting legacies of SSA is likely to be the empowerment of local communities. This Mission strongly recommends that the existing practice of entrusting the responsibilities of planning, implementation, including civil works, and school development to VECs/PTAs to be continued and strengthened in all states. Moreover, this Mission recommends that wherever feasible states should be encouraged to move towards “whole school planning and budgeting”.

### Financial Management and Procurement

The Mission recommends the following:

- The FMP Manual be translated into local languages and widely disseminated at the sub-district levels.
- Fund flow arrangements to be streamlined.
- States should submit their statutory audit report on time to the GOI.
- Internal audit mechanism needs to be strengthened.

**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN**  
**First Joint Review Mission**

**Terms of Reference (ToR)**

**INTRODUCTION**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a comprehensive and integrated flagship programme of the Government of India, to attain Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in the country in a Mission mode. Launched in partnership with the State governments SSA aims to provide useful and relevant education to all children in the 6-14 age group by 2010. It is an initiative to universalize and improve quality of education through decentralized and context specific planning and a process based, time bound implementation strategy. Its goal is consistent with the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment (2002), making elementary education a fundamental right of every child, and with the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universalizing primary education by 2015.

The Development Objectives of the project are as follows:

- (a) To reduce out of school children by at least 9 million in the 6-14 age group, with an increase in enrollment, in the process of universalizing elementary education
- (b) To narrow existing gender and social gaps so that enrolment of girls will be near parity with boys, enrolment of children of SC and ST will be near parity with that of other groups; and enrollment of children with disability will increase.
- (c) To increase the quality of education of all elementary school students so that learning will be improved and transition rates from primary education to upper primary education will increase.

SSA is a national programme largely resourced through national resources in which limited external funding is provided by the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Commission (EC). As per the Agreements, the GOI and Development Partners (DP) will carry out a Joint Review Mission (JRM) twice a year. These JRMs will take place in January (to include field visits) and July of each year and will be coordinated and led by GOI. The main objective of the JRM will be to review progress in the implementation of the program with respect to the Development Objectives and to discuss follow up actions.

The First Joint Review Mission of SSA is scheduled from the 24<sup>th</sup> of January to the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 2005.

## MISSION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Mission will be the following:

1. To review district plan approvals and GOI budget allocations.
2. In States to be visited, to review
  - a) overall programme implementation.
  - b) financial management, procurement and safeguard issues.
3. Provide recommendations on any studies to be undertaken in the following six months.
4. Estimate the financial contribution of external partners.

The purpose of the January JRM should be more to look at processes being adopted to achieve the development outcomes of SSA and to review State & district specific strategies being adopted that underpin the impact of the programme.

The Field visits would produce more textured, qualitative data and information. During their visit to the states, the Mission would enquire, in detail, into the following aspects:

- Progress against sanctioned interventions.
- Status of out of school children -- identification of districts and sub district clusters with large number of out of school children -- implementation of strategies towards bringing children back to school. (Development objective 1)
- Progress towards establishing a baseline with regard to gender and social groups - identification of districts, clusters and communities needing more focused intervention. (Development objective 2)
- Quality of education including status of teacher recruitment and training (Development objective 3)
- Program management : issues of staffing & capacity building ; adherence to financial management & procurement procedures ; Timeliness and volume of fund releases (both from the State and GOI) and utilization.

The review of the Financial Management and Procurement (FMP) procedures will be carried out as part of the JRM. The Mission would review the extent to which States are complying with the provisions and processes laid down in the FMP Manual of SSA.

- Progress against procurement plan for 2004-05.
- Post review of a few contracts
- Discussion with State on IPAI report (if relevant).
- Status of audit reports.
- Review of accounts staffing / training.

The Recommendations would be centered round the following :

- Assessment of programme management and implementation arrangements (including financing & procurement).
- An assessment of State, district and sub-district monitoring systems in place.
- Assessment of progress towards the Development outcomes (in the 8 states visited)
- Specific districts and states requiring focused attention and targeting during the project.
- Focal areas requiring attention / emphasis

- Areas of capacity building
- Identification of areas for further qualitative research/ case study.

## MISSION PLAN

The Mission would visit the eight states of *Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal*. Each state would be visited by a two member Team. However four states, viz Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab & Tamil Nadu would have an additional member in the Team to look at Financial Management and Procurement issues.

The Mission would comprise twenty members. Members would be chosen in such a way that expertise would be available for all functional areas, including Financial Management & Procurement. The Agency wise composition would be as follows:

- GOI – 10 members including Mission Leader
- WB – 5 members
- DFID – 3 members
- EU – 2 members

A core team of six members (3 GOI + 3 DPs) will be responsible for initial preparatory work, dissemination of information with respective Agency teams and compiling of the final report and aide-memoire.

## TIME FRAME

The JRM would take place between Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2005 and 7<sup>th</sup> February 2005 as follows:

Day/ date	Activity
24 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2005	GOI briefing to Mission members
24 <sup>th</sup> Jan – 25 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2005	Initial discussions, analysis of documents and preparation for field visits
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan, 2005	Depart for States
27-28 Jan, 2005	State level discussion
29 – 30 Jan, 2005	Visit to District 1
31 <sup>st</sup> Jan-1 Feb, 2005	Visit to District 2
2-3 Feb, 2005	State reports & Wrap up
3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb, 2005	Wrap up meeting at State level (Draft Aide –Memoire to be presented to the State)
4 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2005	Return to Delhi
5 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2005	Synthesis Report writing / Aide Memoire & pre-wrap up.
7 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2005	Wrap up / Report presentation to GOI

## DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION REQUIRED

**Information to be provided by GOI**

1. State and district wise PAB approved budget allocations – 2003-04 & 2004-05.
2. PAB minutes for 2004-05
3. Information on Release of funds to states. – 2003-04 & 2004-05.
4. Report on Concurrent Financial Review by IPAI.
5. Progress report on roll out of the FMP Manual and staffing & training of accounts staff - as per Annex 14 of FPM.
6. FMR's (2004-05 up to September 2004).
7. Status of Audit Reports 2003-04.
8. Overall Program Implementation Report of States (8 States).

The GOI will make available the above documents & information by 7<sup>th</sup> January 2005 to the Mission.

Overall Programme Implementation Report of States

- State and District wise outlay and expenditure– 2003-04 & 2004-05.
- Provision and Release of State share – 2003-04 & 2004-05.
- Progress against SSA goals / and development outcomes for the eight states to be visited (as in table 3.3 of PAD).
- Category wise physical and financial progress against AWPB 04-05 for the State
- Progress against Development objectives (descriptive – for the States to be visited)

Development Objective 1

- Civil works
- Planning
- Household data on out-of-school children
- EGS/AIE
- Community mobilization
  - Formation of VECs/ PTAs/ MTAs.
  - Training of community members.
  - Coordination with Panchayati Raj Structures.

Development Objective 2

- Girls education including NPEGEL
- Interventions for socially disadvantaged groups including minority, SC/ST
- Children with Special Needs

Development Objective 3

- Pedagogical Renewal
  - Teacher recruitment.
  - Teacher training.
  - Classroom transactions.
  - Pupil evaluation systems.
  - Academic monitoring by BRC/CRC/DIET/SCERT
- Research and Evaluation
- Management Information System
  - DISE data
  - Use of data
- Capacity building of staff in position
- Institutional Development
  - Coordination with mainstream education department.
  - Role of SCERT/SIEMAT/Textbook Board in SSA implementation
  - Capacity of BRC/CRC's.
  - Functioning of SPO /DPO's – degree of decentralizations; delegation of powers; functional autonomy.



## Financial & Procurement Procedure

- Status on implementation of FMP Manual.
- Progress against procurement plan for 2004-05.
- Status of audit reports.
- Status of accounts staffing / training.

## **Field Visit of the JRM for SSA – January, 2005 – A Framework**

### **Planning and Monitoring Process**

Process of preparing AWP&Bs.

The implementation process.

Activity-wise bifurcation of Targets and Achievements with specific frequency like quarterly, semi-annual, annual and system of monitoring.

### **Institutions at state/district/sub-district levels like SCERT,DIET,BRC,CRC**

Identification of tasks and Target Group for Interactions.

Process of Orientation/Training Interactions along-with follow-up mechanism.

### **Community and PRI Involvement**

Process of formation of VECs

PRI representation in the VECs

Impact on school environment including change in attendance, out of school children's scenario.

### **Classroom transactions**

Availability and utilization of TLMs

Availability of Textbooks and related learning materials

Teaching, learning and evaluation process

### **Management**

Approved manpower structure, activity-wise, at various levels like state, district, sub-district, etc. and the same in place.

Process of recruitment of teachers.

Rationalisation of teacher's posting.

Teacher's involvement in non-teaching activities, if any.

**List of Members**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Joint Review Mission of SSA**  
**(24 January – 7 February, 2005)**

**Government of India**

1. Dr. E.V. Subba Rao  
(Mission Leader)
2. Dr. Pramila Menon
3. Dr. G.C. Upadhyay
4. Mr. Kabir Vajpeyi
5. Mr. Vijay Kumar
6. Dr. Atindra Sen
7. Dr. Jyotsna Jha
8. Ms. D.V. Hardikar
9. Dr. Rukmini Banerji
10. Mr. Subir Shukla

**World Bank**

11. Dr. Kin Bing Wu
12. Mr. Tanuj Mathur
13. Dr. Venita Kaul
14. Mr. Sushil Kumar Bahl
15. Dr. Robert Prouty

**DFID**

15. Mr. Shan Mitra
17. Mr. Rajeev Kapoor
18. Mr. Roger Cunningham

**European Commission**

19. Mr. Parimal Bardhan
20. Mr. Jos Jonkers

INDIA  
SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)  
FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION

MAHARASHTRA STATE REPORT  
(January 27 – February 3, 2005 )

**1. Introduction**

The First Joint Review Mission team consisting of Dr. Pramila Menon (GOI) and Shri Parimal Bardhan (European Commission) visited Maharashtra from January 27-February 3, 2005 to review progress on the status of SSA programme development objectives and outcomes with respect to improving access, reducing gender and social disparity, enhancing quality and strengthening programme management and service delivery capacity. The Mission would like to thank the Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI for their cooperation and support in undertaking the review. The Mission would also like to extend their thanks to Dr J. M Phatak, Principal Secretary School Education, GOM, Shri J. M Abhyankar, State Project Director and his staff at the State and district levels for facilitating the field visits and discussions with various stakeholders of the SSA programme.

At the State level, it held intensive discussions with the State Project Director, the staff at the State Project Office and several regional Deputy Directors. From the meetings and discussions it was quite evident that the leadership at the political and administrative level are fairly committed to move forward the SSA programme in the State in a mission mode. The Mission appreciates the quality of documentation and analysis of data shared by the State Project Office and at the district level.

The team visited several institutions such as MSCERT, DIET, BRC and few schools, non-residential bridge courses, newly constructed schools/CRCs as well as CRCs under construction in the districts of Pune, Satara, Kolhapur and Ratnagiri to assess progress on programme components. The interactions with the VEC and PRI members were in particular very illuminating in respect of the nature of initiatives being taken up by them to increase enrolment and to reduce out of school children. An important highlight of the mission was that the team got an opportunity to go through the displays of a wide variety of innovative and imaginative teaching-learning materials prepared by teachers from different districts by using the teacher grant.

**2. Improving Access**

*Enrolment:* The State has made substantial progress in increasing enrolment particularly through the schools managed by local bodies(56%), EGS centers and AIE centers. The contribution of the privately aided schools in this effort is also quite high, representing over 31% of the total enrolment. Of the total enrolment, the enrolment in class I to IV accounts for 61 %.

*Out of School Children:* The recently conducted Household Survey (Dec 2004) which was carried out with a campaign mode involving the community, teachers, students,

political representatives and NGOs have captured significant information on out of school children including never enrolled, drop out children and children with disabilities. The data analysed (6-14 age group) for 32 districts including Mumbai urban indicate the total out of school children to be 3.73 lakh, with approximately same number of boys and girls. Of the total out of school children, the girls account for nearly 50% and the SC/ST/OBC around 76%. Among the backward class categories, ST/VJNT children represent about 49% of the total out of school children requiring a special attention. The dropouts account for almost 73%. The survey also generated data on the reasons for remaining out of school. It shows that over 50% of children who remained out of school was due to household work, taking care of siblings and working to improve the family income.

Recognising the realities in the field, the State has developed a number of strategies to promote interventions that would facilitate bringing more number of children to school who for obvious reasons currently remain out of the system. In this effort, the State carries out an annual enrolment drive and it is continually expanding the establishment of EGS and AIE centers such as Vastishalas and MPEGS as well as planning implementation of residential and non-residential bridge courses, centres for the children of migratory workers around sugar cooperative/mining areas and provision of remedial teaching facilities. Partnership between the government, local bodies and NGOs is being strongly promoted under SSA to reduce the number of out of school children by creating alternative school facilities in the relatively difficult areas.

As a drive towards increasing enrolment, a large number of class rooms have been planned to be added in the current year. The civil works for adding more class rooms which remained stagnant for a long period have recently been accelerated. It is expected that by the end of the current financial year, about 69% of the additional class rooms targeted to be added will be achieved provided the sanctioned amount of funds are made available by GOI and the State. The increasing trend in girl child enrolment does not indicate lack of toilets for the girls to be a hindrance. The State has nevertheless been implementing a total sanitation plan in all the villages with a priority to provide toilets in every school. The State Programme has therefore not included building of toilets and provision of drinking water facility in the schools as a priority activity. This is a good example of convergence in service delivery system.

In the districts of Kolhapur and Ratnagiri visited by the team, the out of school children issue is not so significant. The Kolhapur and Ratnagiri districts have about 4500 and 3165 out of school children respectively. Both the districts are trying to enroll these children through EGS, AIEs, bridge courses and NPEGEL programmes.

### **3. Reducing Gender and Social Disparity**

Overall, the gender gap in the State is not so significant as is evident from the girl child enrolment which accounts for 47.5% of the total enrolment according to EMIS data of 2003. Similarly, female teachers represent nearly 57% of the total teachers. In the case of

out of school children also, there is very little gender difference as revealed by the Household Survey.

The SC/ST/OBC teachers constitute a large percentage, nearly 47% of the total teachers. Within the girl child enrolment, the SC/ST/OBC girl children account for almost 59% indicating a greater awareness among the different social groups about the importance of education of girl child. The strategies to cover out of school girls in the districts of Kolhapur and Ratnagiri visited by the team have been carefully worked out. Through activities such as *Kishori Melavas*, the Women Fair, the schools are able to increase girl child school attendance. During such fairs the visits of women of repute in the field of sports and other profession are organized to impress upon the girl children on the importance of education.

The districts have also introduced a programme called *Savitribai Phule Datak Palak Yojana*, a girl child adoption scheme through which it provides monthly stipend to such needy children out of the interest earned from funds raised by the public. The State is also implementing NPEGEL programme in selected educationally backward districts to promote the difficult to reach girl and over-age girl children. Similarly, with the support of the Mahila Bachat Gatts, the women self-help groups more attention is being paid towards girl child education in the age group of 6-14 years. Their efforts have also helped in improving regular attendance of girls in schools.

*Integrated Education for Disabled:* The Household Survey has generated data on disabled children to formulate specific strategies to provide aids and appliances for children with special needs. Several block level camps have been organized to sensitise the parents, teachers and the community about inclusive education. Systematic efforts are being made to network with local NGOs and hospitals for assessment and provision of support. Construction of ramps forms an integral feature of all school buildings. Different workshops have been planned on classroom behaviour management, use of special teaching-learning materials, developing handbook on inclusive education etc.

#### **4. Enhancing Quality**

*Teaching and Learning:* The State has begun to focus on quality aspects of teaching, learning and school environment. In this effort, the MSCERT has already conducted a baseline assessment study in the area of learning achievement. On the basis of the baseline findings, the institute has developed a Manual on Quality Assessment at the school level and it is planning to implement the Manual soon. During the field visits, the team observed that the teacher grant is being utilized effectively for the preparation of teaching-learning material keeping in view the needs of children including the disabled. The team got the opportunity to interact with teachers about the wide variety of teaching materials being developed and their use in classroom teaching.

In the district of Kolhapur visited by the team, the programme is specifically implementing a quality improvement activity called *Rajarshi Sahu Survangin Shikshan Karyakam* emphasizing on teachers' training, remedial teaching and a system of rewarding

well- performing schools on an assessment of three parameters such as student development, teacher development and parents' involvement in the school. The criteria for student development are mainly academic but also include physical and emotional development. This activity has been recently evaluated by the Indian Institute of Education, Pune. Both the districts visited by the team are vigorously encouraging teachers and students to participate in the state scholarship programme for class IV and VIII students by carrying out extra hours of teaching.

The State has launched a rigorous training programme for all primary teachers and Head Teachers to make teaching-learning more effective and joyful, giving emphasis on classroom transaction, evaluation process and importance of remedial teaching.

*School Environment:* The VEC members and the teachers in the districts visited seem to appreciate the need for maintaining proper school environment both inside the classroom and outside. A good number of schools visited in this area have well-ventilated classrooms and well- maintained gardens . Drinking water facility has been provided. Under the State Total Sanitation Programme, toilets are being provided in the schools.

Though a beginning has been made in a quality improvement process, the implementation of these initiatives is yet to take ground. The team observed that in many cases children were sitting on the bare floors. The State and the district bodies have to constantly monitor and carry out follow up activities to ensure that quality learning takes place in each and every school.

## **5. Governance and Institutional Capacity**

*Planning Process:* SSA provided for a well-planned pre-project phase with a number of interventions. The team learned that in Maharashtra, planning is taking place by forming planning teams at village, cluster, block and district levels and supposedly with the participation of different stakeholders. As a preparation towards developing the perspective plan, a Household Survey was carried out in 2001. Both the primary and upper primary teachers were engaged for data collection. While annual data validation has been in practice, a more systematic Household Survey was conducted in 2004 and it is planned to repeat such a survey every three years. Data generated through such surveys should form a basis for annual plan preparation.

The Village Education Committees(VEC), the grassroots planning and monitoring unit in Maharashtra have been in place long before SSA came into existence. The majority of the government funded schools in the State are under the management of Zilla Parishads. The Sarpanch of the Village Panchayat is the head of the VEC and other members are community leaders, social activists, local functionaries and the head teacher of the school. MTAs and PTAs have been constituted and were found to take active part.

*Community Mobilisation:* In the districts visited by the team, it was observed that the VECs are actively participating in the management of the schools. The community participation in the overall school improvement activities has been very strong. The team

witnessed in both Kolahpur and Ratnagiri that community has been contributing towards the general upkeep of the school as well as providing funds to encourage needy students to appear for scholarship examinations.

*Programme Management* : The programme management structure at all levels is operational with the Maharashtra Prathamik Shikshan Parishad(MPSP) , an autonomous body at the apex level. The Executive Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary functions as empowered body. The State Project Director has the primary operational responsibility of implementing the programme in the State with the guidance and support of Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats including the VECs. The administrative staff of the Education and other related departments at the districts and level below are an integral part of implementation. For academic support at all levels provision has been made for formation of resource groups . However, for efficient and effective implementation of the programme the need for capacity building for different functionaries deserves attention.

*MIS*: Various instruments of data collection are currently being implemented using different methodologies . These varying data collection processes have generated different statistics for the same or similar parameters. There is perhaps a need to revisit the entire framework of data collection system and rationalize, if possible in the interest of obtaining credible and meaningful information for better planning and monitoring purposes.

*Staffing*: There are a large number of unfilled positions at the BRCs as well as at the district project offices. At the district level there are many vacant posts of Senior Accounts Clerk. There are presently some 11364 vacant posts of teachers and the Directorate is taking steps to fill them.

*Financial Expenditure*: By December 2004, the reported expenditure by the State based on releases was Rs 207.32 crores including the expenditure on NPEGEL. On the overall, the total expenditure is approximately 24% of the annual plan budget though it exceeds the total amount so far released by GOI and GOM (the State share was released only in November 2004). The overall expenditure which was merely Rs 63 crores in September has accelerated in the third quarter. However, the expenditures on components like interventions for girl children, for disabled children, innovative activities, community mobilization, NPEGEL have been very low. Throughout the State there is a large volume of work-in-progress and it is feared that many such activities will remain unfinished by the end of the year if further funds are not released on time.

The SPD has recently instructed to all the Finance & Accounts staff of the districts to periodically visit the schools and examine the quality of cash management and accounting by the VECs.



## 6. Recommendations

- Greater attention needs to be paid to the out of school children in the tribal areas as they account for nearly 49% with a focus on dropouts.
- Schools may utilize the grants received to improve the learning environment, e. g. provision of sitting mats for the children.
- Implementation plan be developed to operationalise the Manual on Quality Assessment prepared by MSCERT.
- Impact of innovative interventions undertaken at the district level in the field of improving access for the girl child and teaching-learning require evaluation.
- The large number of vacancies in the Finance & Accounts department in the districts must be filled quickly.

**INDIA**  
**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)**  
**FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION**  
**MADHYA PRADESH : STATE REPORT**  
**January 27 to February 3, 2005**

## **I. Introduction**

Madhya Pradesh (MP) is one of the eight states visited by the first Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Joint Review Mission<sup>1</sup> (JRM) during January 27 to February 3, 2003. The Team spent two days in Bhopal meeting with officials in the Rajya Shiksha Kendra<sup>2</sup> (RSK) and in the Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP) and the Department of Education. Then, the Team visited Mandla and Seoni<sup>3</sup> districts for four days before returning to Bhopal to provide feedback to the RSK. The JRM Team is grateful to RSK officials at all levels for their hospitality and for providing a congenial environment to facilitate the review. This report records the main issues discussed and agreements reached with RSK in the context of the terms of reference. It highlights the Team's observation, but will not repeat the details of implementation presented in the State's Progress Report (January 2005).

**Overall Observations.** MP has made remarkable progress in education within three short years between 2000/01 and 2003/04, as reflected in the indicators on access and equity:

- Gross enrollment ratio (GER) rose from 96% to 103% in primary education, from 70% to 82% in upper primary education, and from 89% to 97% in elementary education. The number of out-of-school children decreased from 1.33 million to 625,000.
- Girls' GER increased from 94% to 102% in primary education, from 65% to 80% in upper primary education and from 87% to 96% in elementary education.
- Scheduled Castes' (SC) GER grew from 97% to 103% in primary education, from 69% to 83% in upper primary education.
- Scheduled Tribes' (ST) GER increased from 91% to 99% in primary education and from 50% to 65% in upper primary education.

Such rapid progress in a state with difficult topography and dispersed population, and a higher than national average in terms of the share in the population of Scheduled Tribes (20%) and those living below the poverty line (40%) reflects a strong political commitment, deepened capacity, and continuous strife towards the goals on the part of all levels of the RSK.

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<sup>1</sup> The JRM Team comprise representatives of the Government of India, Mr. Vijay Kumar (Financial Management Specialist) and Mr. Kabir Vajpeyi (School Architecture Specialist), and a representative of the World Bank, Ms. Kin Bing Wu (Lead Education Specialist). In Bhopal, the JRM Team met with the Principal Secretary of Finance (Mr. Sumit Bose), Principal Secretary of Education (Ms. Anshu Vaish), Ms. Neelam Shami Rao (SSA Mission Director, Rajya Shiksha Kendra), and RSK officials responsible for all aspects of SSA. The Team went to Mandla and Seoni Districts. In these districts, the team visited District Project Headquarters, Block and Cluster Resource Centers, ECCE, Education Guarantee Schemes (EGS), tribal and non-tribal primary schools upgraded from EGS, a madarsa for girls, primary and middle schools, headstart programs, integrated education camp for medical assessment, a non-residential bridge course, annual work plan preparation sessions with parents and teachers, an evaluation of student performance meeting of Cluster Academic Coordinators, District Institutes of Education (DIET), civil work sites completed or under construction, and a E-library. The team interacted with the RSK officers at the district, block, and cluster levels, and with panchayat members, parent-teacher association members, villagers, teachers, pupils, self-help groups, and the Collector in Mandla district. The sites visited included both those in the program and those chosen by the Team without prior announcement.

<sup>2</sup> Rajya Shiksha Kendra (State Education Center) is a merger of the State Implementation Society with the State Council for Education Research and Training and Adult Literacy Department for the purpose of implementing SSA under one physical and administrative umbrella. It is a registered society which was formed in 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Mandla is a heavily tribal district and Seoni also has a sizable tribal population.

stakeholders and the civil society. Building on the experience of District Primary Education Program (DPEP), MP continues to fine-tune strategies, innovate to deal with new challenges, identify causes for non-enrollment, dropout, and poor academic performance, design strategies specific to meet block, cluster and school needs, scale-up good practices, and improve systems and set standards for service delivery under SSA. The progress also reflects the effectiveness of the strategies adopted, which includes both supply-side interventions (e.g. school and classroom construction, teacher recruitment) and demand-side interventions or incentives (e.g. free uniform for all girls, free textbooks, Mid-day meal).

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, there are some areas of concerns: (i) school-level FM record keeping and compliance of procurement procedures at the district level; (ii) thoroughness of procurement audit and timely delivery of the audit report to GOI; (iii) effectiveness of multi-grade teaching as it is practiced; (iv) data discrepancy in the total number of children between the ages of 6 and 14 between the count from Census 2001 and that from the state's own child survey and (v) overall implementation of civil works [the State is already addressing (iv) and (v)].

The above points will be elaborated in the following sections, which are structured around: Access; Equity; Quality; Governance, Financial Management and Procurement; and Recommendations.

### **Development Objective 1 – Access**

Key supply-side interventions to expand access include (a) community mobilization and planning, (b) conducting household surveys to identify the out-of-school children (those who have never enrolled and those who have dropped out), (c) construction of schools, classroom and other education infrastructure such as toilets, and (d) the use of Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) to serve dispersed population and bridge course to bring over-aged or drop out into the school system. The distribution of free textbooks to all children and the availability of Mid-Day Meals in all schools, EGS and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIEs) provides the incentives to enroll and remain in school. The following paragraphs discuss the supply-side issues related to each of them.

### **Community Mobilisation and Planning**

The State enacted the People's Education Act (Jan Shiksha Adhinyam) in 2002 which makes education to every child from age 5 to 14 compulsory, and which devolves to Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) (a) the power to make decision and to use funds for improving the schools and (b) the responsibility for mobilizing parents to send their children to school, and for monitoring teacher and student performance. This tremendously energizes the stakeholders and education by decentralizing structures and capacities. About 88% of the total SSA funds in the state are expended through PTA. Planning is taking place from the ground up. Effective convergence of schemes and resources (school buildings, toilets and drinking water facilities, mid-day-meals, school uniform, textbooks, school development and maintenance grants) is visible at the school level.

That said, the degree of parental participation and proactivity of the PTA varies across schools and localities. This could be expected as time is needed for all PTAs to learn their new role. However, because PTA's committee (comprising about 12 people with the principal being the ex-officio secretary) is elected annually, training is required every single year in order for the new team to learn the process, the mechanism and their rights and responsibilities. However,

training is only provided for one day, which may not be adequate as PTAs also need some technical information on school development, such as how the growth of school-age population would drive the plan for expansion and improvement of schools, and how civil works is not just a building but a learning environment and a lot of educational consideration should go into the orientation of the school and the use of space. To be effective, PTAs need to learn a lot about certain technical aspects of educational planning and teaching/learning process. Given such inputs, which the State is already providing, the present norm for training 4 persons in a village and 2 persons per school for 2 days in a year with allocation of Rs 30/- per person seems inadequate. Presently the State, in order to provide additional inputs in training is doing so through support from UNICEF and Nandi Foundation in a few Districts. The State feels that PTA being entrusted with handling convergence from various sources requires additional training hence the norms for training PTA could be more substantive as compared to VECs. PTAs are encouraged to perform better based on certain criteria of enrollment and participation and are awarded with priority inputs within the Block.

The JRM team found that the basic planning tool in the village, the Village Education Register (VER), while exists in most of the sites visited, are not always filled in all respects or updated. Since it is the PTA's responsibility to ensure that children in the neighborhood are in the school, their role in updating the VER should be taken seriously.

Currently at the school and cluster levels, planning is articulated more as 'demand' rather than supported by its prioritisation or strategy to achieve various needs in the school, although in a more organised setting of Jan Shiksha Kendra (JSK or former Cluster Resource Center or CRC), properly articulated plans by different PTAs were indeed noticed<sup>i</sup>. Planning requires information of various options and possibilities to utilise SSA or government schemes to accommodate the out of school children, convergence for making amenities and facilities, etc. Jan Shikshak (formerly Cluster Academic Coordinator or CAC) has a crucial guiding role in this. However not all Jan Shikshaks may be capable in this capacity<sup>ii</sup>.

This may be the first year in SSA where the plans are actually being made at the school/village level and articulated to the JSK/ Block Resource Centre (BRC)/ District Project Centre (DPC). This exercise of PTA articulating their plans to Jan Shikshaks was on in most the districts at this time. For this year, the District Project Offices (DPOs) are aiming to send their respective plans through this process to State Project Offices (SPOs) by first week of March 2005.

### **Household data on out of school children**

The State has done household surveys on the status of children in 1996, and starting from 2000/01, conducted it annually in order to monitor progress on access. Over time, the survey instrument has improved – now it includes collecting reasons for non-enrollment<sup>iii</sup>. About 85% of girls remain out of school due to 5 reasons: sibling care (23%), engaged in economic activities (23%), cattle grazing (16%), weak financial condition (15%), migration (8%). About 86% of boys are out of school for five reasons: engaged in economic activities (24%), cattle grazing (19%), sibling care (19%), migration (8%) and poverty (16%). Other reasons are parental reluctance, health related factors and school environment not conducive. With this database, the State, districts, blocks and clusters can devise strategies to address them.

Since the data from Census 2001 has been made available, the State has compared its own survey on children with that of the Census and found that the State's own survey had 2.4 million fewer children of the age group 6-14 than the Census of 2001. Although not all of these

undercounted children are out of school, this does affect the denominator used for calculating gross and net enrollment ratios, school dropout and completion rates. The State believes that the discrepancies occur mostly in densely populated urban areas. The JRM Team agreed as it crossed checked with PTA members in the rural areas and found them to be able to point out the whereabouts of the out-of-school children and the reasons for non-enrollment, but the same intimate knowledge may not exist in the urban area. The State is preparing to mount another survey in May 2005, to thoroughly count the eligible population and to ascertain their status. The District Collectors and Zila Panchayats are informed and village level mapping has begun. If the Census 2001 data are disaggregated to the block, cluster and habitation level, it would be possible to cross-check at the local level. However, such information has not been made available by the Census Bureau. The JRM Team does not think that using the projected 1991 Census figures would be meaningful for cross-checking purposes.

### Civil works

School buildings are present almost everywhere – along highways, district roads, and interior roads. The presence of schools is a testimonial to the success in enrollment expansion. This is also the first time that the plans for school expansion is based on actual normative data of equating enrolment with built-up area of existing school. The norm stipulates 1.0 sq.m of built-up area per child. This is a giant leap towards rationalisation of school building size for a habitation. To improve the quality of civil works and supervision, District Resource Groups (DRG) are being formed with the help existing building design construction related institutions. These would impart training at different levels, while the implementation team concentrates on construction and monitoring. That said, civil works is a major capital investment of SSA and is expected to last for many years. It could stand further improvement, particularly in the following areas (these are based on the field visits to the districts):

- The expenditure against total allocation for Civil Works has been very low - 26.58% of civil work allocation, till September 2004, however, the State has informed that it has picked up since then. The State attributes imposition of model code of conduct during series of elections and late funds transfer affecting activity during the larger part of the year. However, one of the key issues emerging is also the vacancy of civil works posts at District level and limited control over Rural Emerging Services (RES) engineers who handle the bulk of sites. These posts need to be filled up urgently and a mechanism worked out to bring RES engineers to perform better. In filling up the posts, architects at district level should also be appointed (see below). Incomplete or lack of buildings is very likely to adversely affect the access and retention rates.
- The unit cost of primary school building (Rs 160/sq.ft) seems unrealistic, resulting in cutting of specifications and certain finishing items. This is being revised to Rs 200/- per sq.ft, based on site conditions.
- The present projected gap projected by the State, of 5734 primary school buildings, 13156 middle school buildings, 31917 additional rooms at primary and 14573 additional rooms at upper primary level, 30678 toilets at primary and 5819 toilets at upper primary level needs to be reviewed based on the village level plans emerging presently for making Annual Work Plans (AWPs). These plans are likely to give a more realistic picture and would also help in prioritizing the focus, as well issues related to convergence at different levels.
- Within a District, largely all schools of similar category have similar design, even when physical site conditions may be totally different. The design choices available to a District

need to be broadened keeping in mind the specific requirements, situations, local materials and architectural image of the local habitats, possibility of future expansion, accessibility of site, etc. The above would also apply to design of kitchen, toilets, urinals, drinking water, playground facilities.

- The present design development and selection process does not give enough inputs to the community to make an informed choice. Communities are very often making design choices without understanding wider implications and considerations. Adequate communication and facilitation to select the most suitable design needs to be ensured by the civil works unit. Tools and material for the same need to be systematically developed and understood by the field teams before it is used for the community.
- On few occasions the work on site or its accounts suffer due to change of PTA body in a school. Wherever the construction time overlaps the term of two consecutive PTA bodies, the system must ensure that the working PTA is fully trained in civil works and accounting procedures.
- Under SSA a large number of schools are undergoing expansion through additional classrooms, toilets, drinking water facilities, etc. However, a clear vision of the school expansion is not visible on most of the sites. Thus expansions, in many cases are happening in an unplanned way. A clear master-plan of development is essential and must be made for each school that clearly delineates space for additional rooms, toilet, drinking water and kitchen facilities, playground space, and innovative use of landscape and vegetation to make a learning environment. These need to be made with PTA with technical inputs from Civil works unit.
- Due to large scale, spread out implementation and constantly evolving needs in school buildings, a constant design feedback and review mechanism that puts user feedback and observation in the design process to further refine the existing designs for better functionality and image. This may not necessarily mean additional building costs. However, the mission would need in-house architects at SPO and DPO level for this essential process to deliver better designs.
- Innovations in civil works must be shared at different forums with SSA staff and with other stakeholders in the mission.
- For a large scale mission with substantial allocation for developing building across the state, a system of Building material quality testing is being planned by pooling of existing institutions at Districts (ITI, Polytechnics, Building Centres, etc.). Provision for this is being made in next year plan (2% of Civil works budget for quality). This system, if systematically worked out would go a long way in ensuring use of quality materials in social infrastructure projects. Such systems have been in place in Haryana and Orissa.
- Since the mission depends heavily on Rural Engineering Services (RES) engineers to implement works on site, a through in-house construction quality check is not possible. Like few other states (Maharashtra and Gujarat) where mandatory testing of building materials and random checks by external evaluators is carried out, such a system would augment the quality control mechanism.
- Due to involvement of the PTA, the ownership of the community in the school buildings seems significantly high. However, PTA may not be adhering to technical instructions on all

the sites. This may be due to gap in communication or appreciation of PTA about certain technical details<sup>iv</sup>.

- Insufficient attention has been paid to school as an environment for learning. Classrooms are invariably dark. This makes it difficult for children to see and can damage their eyesight by having to read and write in this condition. Since electric lighting is not available, it is all the more important to maximize the amount of natural light in classrooms. Without altering the existing schools, natural light can be maximized by increasing the reflective surface within and around the classroom, for example, by painting windows and doors are painted light yellow, instead of the current grey or blue, and do not block the window with a cabinet. If the school has yet to be built, the following could be considered: Orienting the building and the windows to maximize availability of sunlight during school hours, increasing the size of the window, allowing for the top of the window to be opened even during rain or hot weather.
- The design of room size 5m x 3.5m for classroom seems to be too narrow for multi-grade teaching situations, especially where the attendance is above 30 children. The size as well the classroom connection with spaces needs to be reviewed with respect to actual usage of space. Most school buildings lack any protected and maintained outdoor environment. Lack of any vegetation is particularly conspicuous in most of the school sites even when they are in the forest area.
- Specifications of prescribed design of toilets are not being followed at some sites<sup>v</sup>. This has a danger of making them unhygienic or rendering the toilet useless after few years.
- On the sites visited, quality of technical supervision by civil works professionals was poor on some remote sites (sites away from main roads, in interiors)<sup>vi</sup>. PTA may not be adhering to technical instructions on site. This may be due to gap in communication or appreciation of PTA about certain technical details<sup>vii</sup>.
- Maintenance of school buildings remains an area of concern. While grants for school maintenance are being given, a systematic maintenance plan for each school is not in place. Ideally, after the building is constructed, an orientation to PTA along with a prioritized maintenance drill could be brought in place. This needs to include issues of preventive maintenance, periodic maintenance and daily housekeeping.

### **Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Alternative and Innovation Education (AIE), Residential Bridge Courses (RBC), and Non-Residential Bridge Courses (NRBC)**

EGS is an MP innovation that won a Commonwealth Award, and that was adopted by SSA as an effective strategy for scaling up nationwide. It remains the key institution to enroll children. A general perception across the State, District, Block, Cluster and Village level about the EGS Schools is that they have been very effective because they are located within the community and easily reachable by children: the teacher (Guruji), who earn about 2,500 rupees per month. The entry level salaries of EGS Guruji (belongs to the village community) and Contract teacher (grade III) for primary level is same. This reduces teacher absenteeism. The non-permanent nature of job of Guruji gives leverage to PTA to demand performance. At the state level, (untrained) Guruji are encouraged to enroll in the State-wide 2 year distance learning course of D.Ed. through DIETs in order to raise their competency.

The State is upgrading EGS that have been in operation for five years to Primary Schools (PS). Even those EGS that have only 50 students, they are being converted to PS. Where conversion takes place, schools will receive additional annual grant of 7,500 rupees to improve their facilities, and they will have two classrooms and two teachers, instead of one. One of the two teachers must be a woman in order to serve as a role model for girls. In some upgraded EGS schools, the benefits of upgrading occurred but not in all situations.<sup>viii</sup> Districts, at their own discretion and unique situation have contemplated using innovation funds to set up EGS and AIS<sup>ix</sup>. The State considers non-residential bridge courses and non-residential bridge courses as AIE, and children in these courses also receive the Mid-Day Meal.

## **Development Objective 2 -- Equity**

MP has been very successful in closing the gender gap between boys and girls, and the social gaps between the general population and SC and ST children. For children with special needs, particularly those with disability, medical assessment is going on statewide and training is taking place to help teachers identify various forms of special needs.

## **Girls Education including NPEGEL**

The increase in girls' enrollment and reduction in the gender gap shows that the strategies of using incentives and demand side financing is working. To relieve girls from sibling care responsibility during school time, 8224 Early Childhood Care and Education Center (ECCE) have been started. The distribution of uniforms to all girls through PTA, funded by NPEGEL has substantially raised the status of girls in the eye of the parents and communities. In addition, MP's Tribal Development Department provides a stipend of 30 rupees for each tribal girls enrolled, and a cash award of 500 rupees to every girl who has made the transition from Grade 5 to 6, Grade 8 to 9, and Grade 10 to 11. MP also comes up with an innovation by providing bicycles to girls who have completed elementary education and enroll in secondary education. Residential schools for girls are being set up although not in a large scale. Learning through Open School is promoted to provide flexible learning to girls of all ages. To promote girls retention, model cluster school provides various support, such as payment of examination fee for BPL/SC/ST girls, providing writing materials, and awards for best girl student maximum attendance, etc. The State also provides SSA textbooks and teacher in-service training to madrasas which adopt the State curriculum, in addition to their own religious education.<sup>x</sup> There are residential and non-residential bridge courses for girls. However, the demand for the residential bridge courses exceeds supply, particularly in heavily tribal districts.

As a strategy towards retention of girls, Model cluster schools are being developed on the basis of best performance on girls enrollment, accessibility to surrounding villages and higher density of SC and ST population. 2840 schools under NPEGL and 1633 under innovation head of SSA are being planned. Such schools to have additional room, activity centre, toilet and drinking water that are currently being designed with inputs from school girls.

The JRM team observed that many poor children do not have any sweater or warm clothes other than the thin summer uniform they are provided, and suffer in the cold in winter, which lasts for about 3-4 months. When the basic needs for warm cannot be met, they could not possibly pay attention in class. Thus much of the efforts and resources that have gone into providing education are wasted. The JRM Team suggest that instead of distributing uniform to girls every year, parents or students can be given a choice of whether they want to have a free sweater for their children to keep them warm in the winter. They would receive the same amount



of subsidy but can choose whatever that suit their needs better. They could top off the subsidy amount if the sweater is more expensive than the uniform.

### **Interventions for Socially Disadvantaged Groups**

A major cause of non-enrollment is poverty and migrating parents. The variation of conditions in localities require locally specific strategies. The JRM saw some successful interventions. For example, a nomadic Muslim community involved in begging was motivated by SSA and the children brought to attend a NRBC. A volunteer teacher from the community was found teaching this course. The course was being attended by more than 10 children who clearly appreciated the opportunity for schooling and want it to become residential<sup>xi</sup>. Flexibility has also been exercised in reaching difficulty communities. For example, Baiga Alternative School has been conceived in 12 tribal Baiga habitations where the norms did not allow an EGS to be opened. Here the number of children were too small to open an EGS. Here, the qualification of teacher was relaxed (Grade VIII passed could be a teacher here).

As sibling care is a necessary duty of poor children, many bring their younger brothers and sisters to class, particularly where a fully fledged Early Childhood Care and Education center (ECCE) is not available. Pre-service and in-service training program should include a component on how to give these younger siblings some activities to do that can foster their development while they are in class.

### **Children with Special Needs**

The efforts towards organising comprehensive camps for identification of children with special needs, diagnosis, treatment and distribution of aids is commendable. Convergence of resources, technical expertise of medical professionals and proper publicity to participate in such camps was noticed<sup>xii</sup>.

The DISE data has broadly four categories of classification of children with special needs. It deals with absolute visual impairedness, hearing impairedness, etc. Children with partial orthopaedic, visual or hearing, mental/learning problems are captured in the Integrated Programme Monitoring System (IPMS), the in house software developed by the state for the purpose of planning and monitoring. This should be further used to evolve school specific IED strategies<sup>xiii</sup>.

The understanding of needs for special children in Civil Works has so far been restricted only to providing access ramps. Very often the school premises may need other provisions like a rail near entrance, toilet, circulation space, or a bench in a classroom. This realisation is missing and efforts of IED and Civil Works do not converge significantly to ensure adequate provisions in school environment. However the State informed that toilets are now being designed keeping children of special need in view.

### **Development Objective 3 -- Quality**

Although it is too early to have indicators that show progress on student achievement, the quality of school inputs has been improved through curriculum revision, teacher training, provision of free textbooks to all children, provision of teaching learning material (TLM) grants to teachers, and evaluation and research. There are three most notable changes that are likely to lead to improvement of student learning: teacher recruitment through examination, incorporation of "hard spot" diagnosis into teacher training; and the introduction of student assessment.

## **Teacher Recruitment**

MP has not hired regular teachers in 2003/04, but will hire about 35,000 in 2004/05. When the new teachers are hired, the pupil-to-teacher ratio will be improved. At present, the PTR is 41:1 in primary and 34 in upper primary, with large variation across schools.

To date, teachers have been recruited through an interview process alone, which can lead to non-educational consideration in selection. Starting 2005, teachers will be recruited through an open examination – Combined Eligibility Test where the professional competencies and teacher experience shall have weightage. Currently female teachers account for about for 26.5% in the school system. 38% of female teachers are appointed under SSA. The State reserves 50% of the positions at all levels for woman teachers and recruitment is through Local Bodies. Only those scoring above 40% will be considered. The scores would be posted in the public to ensure transparency. This will help raise the academic standards and provide a more objective and transparent criteria for recruitment.

## **Teacher Training, Evaluation and Research**

The in-service training has been improved from the DPEP time. Training modules have been extended to cover the hard spots of the teachers. Focus will be on subject matter content, and methods of teaching them, transfer of student learning from one level to the next, remedial actions needed.

The JRM Team observed that some of children's chalk boards provided in the schools were not being used for quite some time<sup>xv</sup>. Similarly certain other provisions made for activity based learning were also not being used. Only in a few sites, its effective use was found. Incidentally these were also EGS to upgraded to PS schools<sup>xv</sup>. However, teacher training has yet to be extended to cover effective multi-grade teaching.

DIETs have been engaged in research in order to support quality improvement. Cohort analysis is being undertaken to get a better understanding of the pattern of repetition and dropout throughout the cycle. Evaluation of impact of hard spot analysis with pre- and post tests is being pursued. Efforts are also made to link education evaluation and research with thesis done by students in education. This will certainly serve a dual purpose of producing action oriented research and to cultivate the development of a reflective practitioner among teacher trainees and education researchers.

## **Classroom Transactions/Multi-grade Teaching**

EGS accounted for much of the enrollment expansion. However, the current practice of multi-grade teaching as observed in many classrooms does not engage each and every children all the time as teachers tend to group two or three grades separately and line them up to sit in rows and lecturing from one group to another. There is no interaction among students to work on projects, as effective multi-grade teaching would envision. This is largely due to the unavailability of many learning resources such as supplementary reading, self-learning materials, and educational games and aides, and insufficient attention in training on multi-grade teaching. Successful experience from other countries, such as Colombia's New School Program, which provides multi-grade teaching with high quality materials and learning aides and book corners, could be examined.

## **Pupil Evaluation Systems**

In 2003, the State introduced monthly, quarterly and annual student assessment in every grade for every child to provide the basis of evaluating student learning outcomes and of providing supplementary (compensatory) education. Student performance is disaggregated by gender, SC, ST, OBC, and general. This allows BRC, Jan Shikshaks, teachers and PTAs to see the pattern of achievement and compare them among groups, and across schools, clusters, blocks, and districts. Students and schools with weaker performance will receive special attention, in the form of remedial education, through 'head start' programs (which use a variety of methods including computer aided instruction) to work out the hard spots. Pupil evaluation is shared with PTA on a regular basis by the school teachers. The response of the PTA is also recorded in a register<sup>xvi</sup>. Academic monitoring by BRC/ JSK (CRC) / DIET/SCERT is done on a monthly basis.

Student performance has become a focus of school improvement plan for parents, teachers and education officials. Furthermore, Board examinations at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> classes were introduced in 2003 to provide a statewide standard. Academic results of children in schools of different legislative constituencies are tabled in the Legislative Assembly every year so as to focus political attention on quality.

The Head start project using multimedia based learning is designed to focus on the hard spots of children identified by teachers across subjects and grades. The State informed that the multimedia is systematically designed through a laid down procedure. These are functional in select 2718 CRC (JSK). JRM visited several JSKs and found the infrastructure as well the trained teacher / instructor in place. But more serious issue was the availability of power that is erratic and does not allow the centre function with-in the block in a planned way.

## **MIS**

The Integrated Programme Monitoring System (IPMS) which includes data from household survey of children and student performance, and District Information System on Education (DISE) systems which tracks enrollment, student flow, and teacher stock, are strengthened with an extensive database to monitor trends and track progress down to the individual student level. Data have been used for policy making, teacher training, and student performance monitoring.

While DISE data have been extended to cover EGS and private schools, CBSE schools do not report education statistics to DISE. Thus, the DISE data are not encompass all the schools. The household survey does cover the education status of all children, and there are discrepancies between the two databases. There is a discrepancy between the IPMS and the 7<sup>th</sup> All India Educational Survey, but the reason is not known. There are genuine efforts to use IPMS and DISE data to devise strategies and intervention to expand access and improve quality at the State, district, block and cluster levels.

## **V. Governance, Financial Management and Procurement**

Accountable governance, sound financial management, and transparent and impartial procurement of goods and services are keys to successful implementation of SSA. The following paragraphs highlight the observations of the JRM Team.

## Governance and Institutional Development

The JRM team observed a substantial strengthening of vertical linkages and accountability between the state, districts, blocks, clusters, and schools through regular consultation, monitoring and feedback. Lateral linkages are also strengthened between government institutions such as Tribal Development Department, Women and Child Development Department, Rural Development Department, the Panchayati Raj institutions, SCERT and DIET through convergence of funds and schemes and mutually supporting functions for SSA. Overall, there is a deepening of understanding of the effectiveness and limitation of various strategies to expand access and improve quality, and a greater flexibility in implementing strategies that supports sound pedagogy, and that cater for locally specific solutions to problems at the state project level. They, in turn, can provide more effective guidance to the district levels and those below. SPO and DPO seem to enjoy a reasonable degree of functional autonomy.

Service standards are set and enforced and an accountability system is in place by and large. Funds are transferred from the State to the district within 5 days; grants are transferred to PTAs' accounts within one month of receipt by the districts. A coordinated approach between the three – RGSM, SCERT, Text Book Corporation has resulted in timely delivery of textbooks to all schools no later than 10<sup>th</sup> July, within 10 days after schools open. This good practice has made MP a site for visit from other states to learn how to do the same. School uniforms have been distributed to all girls in the State under NPEGEL. Due diligence is done as reflected in the schools' records of regular visits and comments of Cluster Academic Coordinators. A grading of overall SSA District performance by RSK is introduced and communicated to all District Magistrates (DM) and their respective Divisional Commissioners.

Capacity building of staff in position is on-going. However, training and awareness could be extended further to fit the 'mission mode' of SSA, which requires an altogether social orientation across largely all the mission components. Thus, a teacher is not just an academic professional but also entrusted with a social role to understand the village dynamics, identify problems and propose solutions that would work within a social context. The same would apply for CRC, BRC, DPC all the way up to SPD. The DIETs also cannot just restrict themselves to pre-set academic trainings but have to assume a more dynamic role with a strong social understanding and focus in it. The Civil Works engineer is no longer just a technical professional but has to communicate and get the building work implemented with the community. The same applies to accounts as well as information system. Thus, each key area of competency is adjoined with a social-work related competency as well (Academic-Social, Techno-Social, Administrative-Social, etc) for effective SSA. The professional trainings can be extended to directly address this combination of competencies.

After a relatively stable regime of key incumbents at the SPO, there were two quick transfers at the State Project Director's level in the last year or so. It is hoped that the present incumbent who has joined recently will have a reasonably long tenure. This will be in the interest of success of the mission. On the other hand, it was seen that in the Finance unit there is a need to have a sound *finance team* so that transfers or absence otherwise of individuals does not create any difficulties.

JRM noted that there is a good mix of deputationists and contractual employees in the SSA. This is a healthy state of affairs, specially when, as the JRM was informed, the contractual employees are professionally well qualified.

## Financial Management

*Roadmap for implementing FMP Manual:* The executive committee of state implementation society(SIS) has adopted the manual on 24 Dec ,2004 and was sent to the district offices to implement the same. The District level officers were also given training on the implementation of manual. However, visits to Mandla and Seoni district disclosed that the manual is not known much at block , cluster and school (PTA)level. Action is on to provide a Hindi translation of Manual to district and below level offices and impart training to them. JRM recognizes that users of the manual at block, cluster and school (PTA) level need a thorough introduction to these provisions for which suitable training inputs will be needed.

The district set up has some knowledge of manual provisions, but its impact will be felt only after its contents are imparted below district level formations. The results of these efforts will be clear perhaps next year.

*Fund flow arrangements.* The JRM Team has the following observations:

- While central government funds are credited directly to the designated SSA bank account of the SIS, the state share generally is credited to the PLA/PD account at treasury. This is not in consonance with the provisions of the SSA Implementations or Finance Manual.
- Data analysis at districts visited revealed that the SPD released funds to the district in several instalments—to Mandla in 8 instalments and to Seoni in 7 instalments – in 2004-05 till now. Ideally funds should be released in 2 or 3 instalments for improved program planning and management to district and below levels.
- Fund flow from state to the district office was over with in a week of the receipt of fund from Ministry and the two district offices JRM visited have certified that they have transferred funds to their sub ordinate formations (block, cluster and PTA level) within a month of receipt of funds from state project office.
- JRM suggests that the Ministry may consider releasing the first instalment in April on the basis of an assessment of previous year's programme implementation progress (financial).After the PAB meeting, suitable adjustment in the release of funds can be done.

*Expenditure trend and monitoring.* The Team has the following observations:

- Analysis of expenditure statements of 2004-05 (upto Dec 31, 2004) that expenditure was very sluggish on most of the interventions; this especially impacted the progress of programs like TLE program (upgraded middle school, primary schools), teachers training (because the training activities started late) and especially civil works. Civil works were also stated to be adversely affected by the constraints imposed by the election commission during the election period in Madhya Pradesh (M.P. had number of elections at different levels last year)
- An elaborate system of monitoring exists at the state project level and also at block and cluster levels. Financial issues are also discussed exclusively every month in meeting convened by the state project director with the project coordinator(Finance).We however ,did not find any written advisories on the basis of these review meetings
- JRM visits to district and subordinate formations revealed that at school (PTA) level, financial management is weak. Stock register were not maintained. Voucher keeping was not scientific and even cash book in one school was not maintained. Utilization of grants specially teachers grant was not satisfactory
- There is a strong need to orient the PTA and the school teacher to the basics of good financial management. This is all the more important because nearly 88% of the total SSA

funds in the state are spent through the PTA. JRM also suggest that PTA should decide on the TLE to be procured from the relevant funds.

*Accounting arrangements.* The Team has the following findings:

- At the SPO level, most of the accounting records are being maintained but a scrutiny of their upkeep could not be done due to paucity of time.
- At the district level, most of the account records were being maintained. However, the upkeep of accounting records needs improvement at block and cluster level. At the PTA level, without doubt, the upkeep of the records is dismal. The necessity of maintaining a suitable ledger at PTA level is now recognised and the APC Finance at Seoni informed that they have devised a suitable format for such a ledger which will be introduced from next year. Improvement in accounting system at PTA level includes:
- Proper upkeep of vouchers, Cash book, cheque-book, etc. In particular, the PTA members ought to be acquainted with the proper maintenance of records pertaining to civil works, specially MB, completion certificate and handover-taking over certificates. The utilization certificates are being routinely issued, as the test check revealed. Proper supervisory checks of these records by the inspecting officers namely Jan Shikshak and APC Finance is required.
- Considerable efforts are needed including intensive training, and regular supervision, to comply with the financial systems and procedures at the school level (PTA) where 88% of total project expenditure takes place. While PTA is an elected body and has a representative character of stakeholders, the JRM feels that in matters concerning compliance with financial procedures and proper accounting systems, the responsibility should be more on the headmaster of the concerned PTA school who is incidentally the ex-officio member secretary of the PTA.

*Auditing Arrangements* are as follows:

- Statutory Auditing: Audit report on the annual account 2003-04 was due on 21 Nov. 2004 as per the terms of references to the CA (Auditors). It was finalized on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan. 2005.
- Internal Auditing: Internal Auditing was commissioned through CA firms in 16 districts and SPO proposes to cover all the 48 districts for internal auditing. The process is now under way to appoint the firms of CAs for the job.
- Government Audit: Audit by the CAG(AGMP) was conducted during Jan. ,05. Manager(Finance) stated that no inspection report was issued so far by the AG audit team.
- Selection of Statuary Auditor: The SPO has followed the procedure of FMP regarding selection of statuary auditors. However, we understand, that branch auditors selected for district office accounts did not go there and instead the District Accounts Staff with all the records /Vouchers etc. were called at the headquarters at Bhopal. The manager finance attributed this practice to avoid any more delay in finalizing the audit certification.

*Management Issues.* The Team has the following observations:

- Shortage of staff: At the block level there were significant shortage of accountants. Shortage of staffs was also significant in 2 DIET we visited viz Mandla and Seoni. In Mandla out of 5 readers posts 4 were vacant, in Seoni all the 6 readers post were vacant. There were vacancies in the lecturers cadre also. 13 post of BAC(block level) are vacant at Mandla out of 27. All these factors clearly affect adversely quality analysis & evaluation work.

- Bank Reconciliation: Bank reconciliation at both Mandla and Seoni was update. In the state project office too it was stated to be up to date.
- Bank Accounts: The state project office has 4 bank accounts for keeping SSA funds. In the district also there are more than one bank account. While some new accounts have been opened to comply with the directions to have accounts in banks with electronic transfer facility. The district had more than one account irrespective of this. The Team is of the opinion that normally one bank account should be operated where all the SSA funds be kept. The State has already issued directions for this.

### **Procurement Procedure**

While the FMP Manual has been adopted by the SIS but as regards the procurement, the Executive committee decided that the State store purchase system will be followed by them in respect of terms covered by store purchase procedure of the state government. Essentially this means that some purchases can be made directly from the designated agencies like Laghu Udyog Nigam at their stated rates, similarly items for which rate contract exists, purchases can be made on rate contract basis.

Scrutiny of records and inquiries at school level however, revealed that for procurement of material for civil works some kind of loose system of obtaining quotations from 3 firms is in vague. The impressions one got was that the system of quotations was not well established nor well defined eg. Sealed quotation or otherwise and whether vendors have been rated or not. The whole system is nebulous at the moment and needs revamping in the context of FMP Manual provisions.

Service contract for upkeep and maintenance of UPS, Computers etc. was not enforced well in a couple of cluster Head start offices where the equipment was lying unattended by the service provider for months.

#### *Procurement of computers for 2070 schools under Headstart*

Nearly 6210 computers were procured during 2002-03 at a cost of Rs 31.35 Crore. For the purpose, the State government engaged the National Informatics Centre Service Inc. (a GOI enterprise under NIC) for procurement and other services. The company's fee was about Rs 2 Crore.

#### *Comments by Statutory Auditors*

The Statutory Auditors have also pointed out that the procurement procedure was not followed but have not quantified such transactions.

### **VI. Recommendations**

#### **Data**

- Data discrepancy in the total number of children between the ages of 6 and 14 between the count from Census 2001 and that from the state's own child survey should be reviewed and there should be house to house survey, particularly in the urban areas, and children who do not have a home should also be accounted for.

## Planning

- The Village Education Plan articulated by the community must also state the priority given to each activity/ need by the PTA. This would enable the CRC/ BRC and DPC to realistically prioritise the plan and its allocation in the AWP, while accommodating the community's perception in it.

## Training

- Multigrade teaching which is going on in many EGS and primary schools should be strengthened through the development of teaching and learning materials and activities specific for multigrade setting. Teacher training should also specifically address the challenge of multigrade classrooms.

## Civil works

The State may be working towards some of the following:

- Immediate recruitment of staff at District level.
- Appoint at least one architect at district level in the above drive.
- Renewal of design exercise. Bringing the Pedagogy and CW unit together to analyse the pool of existing designs for their actual performance in the field. This is especially true for EGS designs and designs from multi-grade perspective.
- Formulation of proper guidelines / training of civil engineers in orienting and placing the buildings on site. Focus on simple ways to increase the natural reflected light.
- Creating a network of resource institutions for civil works (ITI, Polytechnics, Building Centres) for testing quality of building materials, soil, etc. at district level. Where above institutions are not present, a collaborative effort with suitable government department / institution may be explored to form / support such facility towards social infrastructure in the District.
- A comprehensive Master-plan development process must be undertaken for each school premises with PTA to address the entire school's physical learning environment.
- Right from the planning level, school building maintenance must be addressed. This would result in modifying specifications for low maintenance, design modifications to reduce maintenance.
- Monitoring mechanism for progress needs substantial inputs, especially where it is being handled by sub-engineers. Tools for monitoring must be set and used effectively.

## Suggestions for Civil Works

- Involvement of architectural colleges / faculty/ students/ fresh pass-outs in supplementing architectural inputs.
- Undertake the collection of anthropometric data from different regions (tribal, non-tribal, urban, rural, girls, boys) and use that for refining the architectural designs.
- Mock-up exercises to be undertaken at the block / district training facility using dry brickwork/ etc. for simulating the various needs for the children with special need. This would be useful in deciding the kind of provisions required by different types of such children in different spaces – toilets, corridor, classrooms
- A visual documentation of Cost Effective Construction Technology (CECT) for use in training to convince new RES engineers, VECs, PTAs. This must include material in video and photographic form.
- The MIS` data to also include building areas (covered, floor, etc) in order to be used as an effective planning tool.



- The training to PTA must clearly delineate the non-negotiable in technical specifications from those where some liberty could be taken.
- Motivation of PTAs to form vegetation or fencing based boundary to create a protected outdoor environment of learning.
- For prioritising the allocation of school infrastructure or amenities, a planning tool, SPIDAP developed during West-Bengal DPEP could be used.

#### **Other Suggestions**

- The DIETs in the tribal areas could include some context-specific material in the curriculum. The traditional knowledge-base of tribal communities could also be assimilated and consciously included in the curriculum being developed for the respective tribal districts. Networking with Council of Tribal folk arts (*Adivasi Lok-kala Parishad*) under Government of MP would be of great value since a wealth of archived material could be available that needs to be adapted for children. The collection of material from various tribal and non-tribal communities from India at the Indira Gandhi National Museum of Man at Bhopal is another resource that could be utilised.

#### **Financial management and training**

- PTA for the first time is handling funds over 4lakhs and amounts related to CW, MDM, uniforms, TLM, SD, Repairs, etc. are all going to their accounts. Financial planning inputs are required. Training is needed to improve record keeping at the school level. PTA should post the sources and uses of funds in a public place to increase transparency and accountability.
- The statutory audit report should include specific comments on procurement audit. The audit team should go to the districts and below to verify information, rather than asking the documents to be sent to Bhopal for review. The audit report should also be delivered to GOI in a timely manner.
- SSA funds from State government should also be credited to SSA bank account rather be routed through PD account.
- SPO should release funds to districts in two to three installments and not in 7 to 8 installment as is the practice now.
- MHRD may consider releasing the first installment in April on the basis of a assessment of previous year's programme progress.
- Improvement of accounting system and maintenance of records at PTA level is a priority item.
- At PTA level, the onus of compliance with the financial procedure and proper accounting system should fall on the head master of the respective school.

## References from field visits

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<sup>i</sup> Jan Shiksha Kendra (JSK) at Bhowma (Seoni) where several PTA's had gathered to share their plans with the JRM. At PS Udepani (Seoni) the entire PTA had gathered to discuss a plan for adding classroom in the present school in a truly participative environment. This was also a planned JRM visit spot. However such articulation of a 'plan' by PTA was not noticed in randomly visited sites (PS at Crusher Tola, JSK at Bakauri in Mandala block, PS Samroha Tola Kapa, Mandla).

<sup>ii</sup> At a randomly visited site of JSK at Bakauri in Mandla block, the Jan Shikshak (CRC) could not articulate the options available for accommodating out of school (working) children of his own cluster.

<sup>iii</sup> A Lok Sampark Abhiyan (LSA) Study of 2003-04 identified sibling care and engagement in economic activities as two prime reasons for being out of school. As a result ECCE centres have been made either close to the schools or are made within the school premises. This has been conceived so that children who look after their younger ones can leave them at ECCE and study in the school. The success of this was evident at few sites

<sup>iv</sup> Noticed at two sites in Seoni: PS Jheeldongaria under construction where the PTA did not appreciate the importance of drip-course in roof projections, or importance of ascertaining manufacturing date of cement before buying. MS Balpura (Seoni Block) where the PTA is using 53 grade cement instead of 43 grade.

<sup>v</sup> Noticed at two sites in Seoni: PS Narayan tola, where soak pit for urinal was not made and discharge was collected in an open pit. PS Lakhawada, where the prescribed design was modified by the PTA/CRC/CAC with little understanding of leach pit maintenance in the long run.

<sup>vi</sup> Noticed at two remote sites in Seoni: PS Sarra Hirri in Kurai Block, where the newly constructed building (inaugurated 4 months ago) had no chalkboards, dampness on walls and ceilings due to inadequate terracing and accumulation of water on loose substrate, dumping of shuttering material on roof, cement floor laid without panels resulting in cracks, hardware fittings of windows not working properly. PS Bhondaki in Kurai Block, where the door frame was lower than prescribed, chalkboard size smaller than prescribed, a door opened between two rooms at a location that is impractical, dumping of shuttering material on roof.

<sup>vii</sup> Noticed at two sites in Seoni: PS Jheeldongaria under construction where the PTA did not appreciate the importance of drip-course in roof projections, or importance of ascertaining manufacturing date of cement before buying. MS Balpura (Seoni Block) where the PTA is using 53 grade cement instead of 43 grade.

<sup>viii</sup> EGS to PS at Samroha Tola Kapa, Mandla has enrolment of 85 children, but presently has only one teacher and one room. It is a remote site, with nearest approach road 1.5 km away.

<sup>ix</sup> In Mandla, Baiga Alternative School has been conceived in 12 tribal Baiga habitations where the norms did not allow an EGS to be opened. Here the number of children were too small to open an EGS. Here, the qualification of teacher was relaxed (Grade VIII passed could be a teacher here).

<sup>x</sup> The JRM team visited a madarsa for girls in Seoni. Of the 278 girls, only about 5 were boys. The school offers classes from pre-school to Grade 8. The Trust raises fund to pay for the salaries of the 12 teachers who work there and provides the building. The Management Committee expresses strong interest to receive the school grant, teachers' grant, uniform for girls and computers from the State

<sup>xi</sup> A child who was earlier involved in begging at a railway station was now attending a Non-Residential Bridge Course (NRBC) at Bhowma Jan Shikshak Kendra in Seoni. He expressed that he was very happy to come to the school since very often he was beaten up over money and food through the day. At least now he was secure. The supervising volunteer teacher said he is learning very fast and was fond of a traditional style of singing.

<sup>xii</sup> A camp with about 591 special needs children from the Keolari block in Keolari Panchayat Samity premises in Seoni was visited by the JRM. The one day camp was planned such that complete check-up, diagnosis of special need, treatment and distribution of aids could be conducted at one spot. The past learning of difficulty in commuting by parents and children to camps, tendency to forget to carry relevant papers if the check-up, diagnosis, treatment and distribution of aids were segregated in terms of time and space had contributed to this way of organising the camp. Such camps were to follow throughout the district within next few days.

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<sup>xiii</sup> MS at Bakauri in Mandla block has at least four children with identified special needs. A child with short sightedness, another with a single eye, a girl with orthopaedic problem in legs and another with some learning problem come to the school. While the school is aware of their problem and has taken some measures, intervention through IED, CRC-BRC chain does not seem to have worked. There are number of levels to be negotiated to reach the school building but the provisions of ramps or rails are missing in the building. This also illustrates the interlink problem between IED and Civil works.

<sup>xiv</sup> Noticed across several sites in Mandla and Seoni: PS at Crusher Tola in Mandla Block, MS & JSK at Bakauri in Mandla block, MS and JSK at Bhoma and MS and JSK at Lakhanwada in Seoni.

<sup>xv</sup> Noticed across EGS to PS sites in Seoni: PS Narayan Tola and PS Bhurkundi.

<sup>xvi</sup> The evaluation result and PTA responses at MS at Bakauri in Mandla block and MS at Jhagra in Seoni were seen in the PTA meeting register. In both the cases, the results were not very encouraging, and the PTA had expressed its concern about the same. In case of Bakauri, the PTA solely attributed the reason to lack of teachers in the school (based on norms, the school needed at least two school teachers).

**INDIA**  
**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)**  
**FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION**  
**ORISSA STATE REPORT**  
**(January 26 – February 3, 2005)**

The SSA was officially initiated in Orissa in 2000-01, in partnership between the Government of India and the state government. As part of the First Joint Review Mission of SSA, a three-member team visited the state. The members of the team were Subir Shukla (GoI), Shantanu Mitra (DFID) and Tanuj Mathur (WB).

At the State Level, the team visited the State Project Office of OPEPA, and the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). The team had meetings with the State Project Director (SPD) and other key personnel in OPEPA.

The team visited Sambalpur and Sundargarh districts where it visited formal schools, EGS centers, CRCs, BRCs, DIETs and the District Project Offices. Interactions took place with teachers, students and parents, community members and representatives (MTA, PTA, VEC) as well as local officials. Detailed discussions were held with the DPCs, District Inspector of Schools, Sub Inspectors and BRCCs.

The mission members would like to express their appreciation to everyone who gave time, co-operation and hospitality during the visit, and especially to the State Project Director the members of the State Implementation Society who accompanied the team to the districts, and the DPCs and their staff. Their openness and ability to provide the information requested was a vital contribution to the work of the mission.

## **1. Overview**

1.1 Orissa has made a solid start in implementing SSA, despite serious fund flow constraints stemming from GoO's difficulty in releasing the state share. Planning and management systems are in place. Very good progress has been made in expanding access to all groups and habitations, in recruiting teachers and in delivering infrastructural improvements. School and teacher grants are being regularly received and utilised. Progress on community participation has been particularly strong, indicating the enthusiasm and latent demand for access to quality education, and bringing strong benefits in terms of accountability and efficiency of resource use. Having achieved almost full enrolment, the key challenge now is to put in place systems to improve the quality of education, which remains an area of concern. A range of pedagogical, staffing, capacity, planning and monitoring issues will need to be addressed if the good progress to date is to be sustained and converted to better educational outcomes for all.

## **2. Summary of Progress against Sanctioned Interventions**

2.1 Primarily due to financial constraints on release of the state share (see Funds Flow section below), SSA expenditure to date in Orissa has been much less than budgeted. In 2003/4 expenditure was Rs 158 crore, just one third of the approved outlay of Rs 472 crore. So far in 2004/5 only Rs 57 crore has been spent against an

approved AWPB of Rs 640 crore, although this will increase substantially following the expected disbursement of additional resources from GoI in February. Information given in the state's Programme Implementation Report suggests that, broadly speaking it is infrastructure provision that has borne the brunt of the funding constraints with construction of classrooms, drinking water facilities and toilets at very low levels of achievement against sanctioned numbers.

2.2 Despite this, the field visits made by the Mission – some of which were unscheduled – provided evidence of widespread and quite consistent implementation at least in terms of inputs. School infrastructure was generally of a good standard with clear evidence in almost all cases of SSA-funded improvements either in the form of additional buildings or improvement of current buildings. Teacher recruitment has picked up recently with the recruitment in January 2005 of 26,000 new teachers bringing the number almost up to the required total strength. School Improvement and Repair and Maintenance grants, as well as TLM grants, all appear to have been disbursed according to schedule and in most cases there was evidence of these grants having been used. Textbooks had been distributed to pupils in all of the schools visited by the Mission.

### 3. Access

3.1 Orissa has made steady progress in expanding enrolment and reducing the number of out-of-school children. The opening of new schools, building of additional classrooms and repairs undertaken has undoubtedly enabled access for nearly all children in the state. Between 2001/2 and 2004/5 the Primary GER has increased from 98% to 104%, and the Upper Primary GER from 49% to 81%. Meanwhile the Primary NER increased from 87% to 93%, and the Upper Primary NER from 42% to 69%. Over the same period the number of Out of School children has fallen from 1.27 million to 236,849.

3.2 The Mission found encouraging evidence of this progress at the ground level. The process of collecting data on these indicators also appears to be quite robust indicating that the statewide progress reported is likely to be genuine. This was confirmed by representatives of VECs and local communities met by the Mission, all of whom stated that the number of out-of-school children in their village had declined markedly in the last two years.

3.3 A number of processes and initiatives have contributed to the steady increase in enrolment, in particular the *School Chalo Abhiyan* enrolment campaign and the community mobilisation drive, which is clearly bearing fruit. These are complementary approaches; enrolment camps can be effective in bringing about substantial short term jumps in the number of children enrolled, but many of these will quickly drop out in the absence of longer-term community engagement. In a number of instances the Mission learned that active engagement by VEC or MTA members with parents of out-of-school children had been a key factor in the enrolment and attendance of these children. In Sambalpur district the Mission visited a school where a programme implemented by Save the Children Fund to motivate children around education issues had resulted in the children themselves taking action to identify children out of school and find solutions to help them to attend, as well as providing academic support to peers in a structured way.

3.4 Another vital factor in raising enrolment has been the provision of facilities in underserved areas through the EGS and AIE schemes. Figures provided by the state government show that nearly 600,000 children have already been enrolled in EGS centres. EGS has clearly been a major factor in the growth of enrolment, which increased by around 1.1 million between 2001/2 and 2004/5 (although it is not clear how many of the children in EGS centres were enrolled before 2001/2 in DPEP districts).

3.5 Although the Mission visited several EGS centres, most of which were clearly functioning with active VECs and teachers, there are clearly some particular challenges faced by these centres, especially of pedagogical nature. At present moreover, EVs are very irregularly paid, usually after long gaps.

3.6 During field visits the Mission found that almost all VECs, and many CRCCs, knew the identity and location of remaining out-of-school children and the reasons for their non-enrolment, and in most cases had worked out a strategy (typically involving mobile teachers or intensified community engagement) to enrol these hardest-to-reach children.

3.7 An important caveat is that progress in translating increased enrolment into correspondingly high pupil attendance appears to have been much slower. Addressing this issue will be one of the key challenges ahead. Regular tracking of attendance figures is about to get underway and these should become a focus of attention in terms of programme target setting.

*Recommendation:* Greater emphasis should be given in future to attendance rates rather than merely enrolment rates in monitoring performance and setting targets.

#### 4. Equity

4.1 Time series data on enrolment, out-of-school children and dropout rates for the population as a whole, and for girls and ST children separately, are given in the Appendix. There does not appear to have been any significant gender gap to begin with on any of these indicators, and this remains the case. The only exception is for dropout rates at Elementary level, which are significantly higher for girls and have narrowed slightly. A gap clearly exists between STs and non-STs in all indicators. Here the general pattern (comparing rates of improvement among ST children with those for the general population) is that the gap has narrowed at Primary level (both for enrolment and drop-out rates) and widened at Upper Primary level. The state has not so far monitored the SC/non-SC gap in respect of these indicators; the Mission recommends that disaggregated data should be generated for SCs in order to allow this indicator to be tracked and targeted in future.

4.2 In addition over 120,000 disabled children have so far been identified, and over 108,000 enrolled. The IED programme appears to have been a success story so far, with large numbers of children identified and in the process of being provided with aids and appliances prior to being enrolled. Across the state 108,000 disabled children have already been enrolled, although it was not clear from discussions how

many were enrolled as a result of the IED programme. Training of parents of children with special needs is also well underway.

4.3 The relative success in reducing the ST/non-ST gap at Primary level is consistent with the rapid expansion of physical access – with EGS and AIE centres playing a prominent role – observed by the Mission during field visits. For example, in Samlapur district all habitations now have facilities within 1km (the Mission did not ascertain to what extent this is the case for other districts). At the same time, several targeted initiatives have been taken, including:

- Formation and training of MTAs to promote girls' education, and creation of capacity in SRG, DRGs and BRGs on strategies for girls' education.
- Various activities under NPEGEL.
- Opening of 396 hostels, covering over 15,000 ST girls, in convergence with the SC/ST Development Dept.
- Mobile schools have been opened in Hyderabad (50 schools) and Raipur (20), for children of migrant workers from Orissa. Whilst this is an interesting initiative, the Mission did not have time to discuss the impact of these schools in terms of enrolment, attendance, teaching hours etc, or the extent of coordination/discussion with the Govts of Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Whether these mobile schools represent a necessary or cost-effective intervention therefore remains unclear.

4.4 In the case of many of the targeted initiatives such as MTAs, creation of gender capacity within SRG/DRGs/BRGs and NPEGEL, as well as other initiatives to make teachers and curricula more sensitive to the needs of girls and STs, it is too soon to judge impact. In due course however it will be important to evaluate rigorously the impact of the many initiatives undertaken to address equity, in order to discover which of them are effective, and to refine and consolidate the equity strategy over time.

*Recommendation:* Rigorous evaluation should be undertaken at an appropriate stage of the impact and cost-effectiveness of the many interventions for target groups (girls, SC, ST and children with special needs) and the strategy for these groups refined and streamlined accordingly. This process should be completed within 2 years; evaluation design and baseline data collection should begin now.

## **5. Improving Quality of Elementary Education**

### **5.1 Enabling conditions**

#### *5.1.1 New modes of access*

The opening of EGS and AIE centres have dramatically increased access to unserved areas and groups. However, there is insufficient differentiation between the needs that these varied contexts present. Thus EGS centres use the formal school textbooks in a single teacher, multi-grade situation. Most of the EVs who face this daunting situation do not appear to be prepared to address it effectively. Similarly, an AIE for working children would need to be different from another that is meant for a small group of younger children not engaged in child labour. A more differential approach needs to

evolved and implemented. To an extent this is visible in the Bridge Course material that provides for children at different levels to be mainstreamed.

In keeping with the above, the Mission noted that the IED component at present emphasises medical aspects. A more *social* understanding of disability would help SSA Orissa develop an *inclusive* approach.

#### *5.1.2 Changes in PTR favorable, but rationalization needed*

Recent appointments of SSSs have succeeded in reducing the average PTR to close to SSA norms. However, during field visits Mission members routinely encountered situations with either too many or too few teachers. This impression is confirmed by MIS data Appendix showing considerable variation in the distribution of schools by PTR. In particular, the recent appointments of CRCCs has deprived many schools of the only regular teacher, leaving behind a team of SSSs who may not be fully positioned to run the school effectively. The posting of women in particular has led to many of them facing difficult placements in remoter areas. Coupled with long delays in release of salaries (in many cases as much as 8 – 12 months), this has made it unrealistic to expect qualitative transaction of teaching learning processes on their part.

At present, in Sundargarh district, the new SSSs recruited have not yet been deployed to their places of posting. This is resulting in expenditure without utilization of services, while children who need these teachers continue to remain deprived.

#### *5.1.3 School environment*

A favourable physical environment was visible in most of the schools visited. This is clearly one of the successes of SSA. Schools look clean, often with a garden, with walls painted in bright colours, creating a cheerful space for children. Where new buildings have been constructed, some elements that promote learning (e.g. games embedded on the floor) have been incorporate. In former DPEP districts, child friendly elements (such as swings or play equipment) are visible, and efforts are on to provide these in SSA districts as well. In a very large number of instances, the community (especially the MTA) has come forward to provide financial support, and has also contributed labour and time (e.g. in terms of monitoring). Fencing is a common demand, and the Mission came across several instances where the community has contributed towards this.

However, painting of fixed elements such as story pictures can tend to limit the usability of these. There was also limited use of the learning opportunities thrown open by the incorporation of material painted on the wall or embedded in the floor or other spaces. This was primarily because teachers do not appear to have the ability to *see* these multiple possibilities, and their (at present) initial understanding of TLM and activity.

## *5.2 Core Inputs / Classroom level components*

### *5.2.1 Curriculum*

Curriculum development for the primary level has followed a consultative, review-based process, involving feedback from stakeholders at different levels. The



curriculum for elementary stage has also been developed, using the NCERT's National Curricular Framework of 2000, following a similar participatory and consultative process, especially at the district level. Teachers' feedback was sought through a teleconference and utilized in finalizing the curriculum. However, this curriculum is not available in document form at the school level, which restricts teachers to teaching according to the textbook rather than the curriculum. Towards this, the publication of the curriculum and making it available in every school needs to be undertaken.

### 5.2.2 *Pedagogical aspects*

The state has adopted activity-based pedagogy as the core classroom process. This represents a significant paradigm shift and textbooks, teacher training, TLM and allied activities support this approach. The Mission team appreciates this emphasis and all the efforts undertaken to enable teachers to bring about a change in their teaching practices.

The classrooms visited presented child-friendly environments, in many of which children were seen to be comfortable and sharing a good relationship with the teacher. Corporal punishment is no more being used as before. Almost all teachers (and others such as VEC / MTA members) support this pedagogy. A good proportion of teachers also make effort to transact the textbooks using activities.

In a majority of the cases, however, it is evident that certain activities are commonly repeated, with new / more appropriate / contextual ones rarely being made. Teachers tend to use more whole class activities and where groups are used, they are not *thinking together*. Typically, higher order activities involving more abstract thinking are not visible. Individual and written activities tend to be fewer than required, while the diversity in the classroom (recently even more increased due to greater enrolment) is not being addressed. Effective multi-grade teaching is rarely visible.

While teachers make use of activities to generate a learning experience for children, there is little reflection encouraged on part of children. Nor are application and consolidation undertaken. All of this tends to affect the nature and degree of learning that takes place. Thus, the implementation of activity-based teaching is clearly at an initial level and now needs to be furthered in order to benefit from all the efforts made so far.

### 5.2.3 *Textbooks*

Based on the curriculum, activity based textbooks have been developed for classes 1 – 5, with that of English for class 5 to be introduced in 2005-06. Class 1 has an integrated textbook, while in class 2 Language and EVS have been integrated. Manuscripts for class 6 books have been developed. All textbooks are also workbooks and provide children with opportunities to undertake activities within the book itself.

These textbooks have drawn from the best DPEP and NGO experiences and incorporate effective means to enable active learning by children. In 2003-04, free textbooks were distributed to 41,83,039 students, with the same number also receiving them in 2004-05. The Government of Orissa has also made provision for poor boys to receive books.

While most teachers interacted with shared that they had difficulties with both the activity based approach as well as integration, many now appear to have gained greater comfort with both.

A teachers' guide has also been developed for classes 1 – 3 and supplied to teachers, with those for higher classes being under process. Feedback from teachers indicates that they value these handbooks greatly as they help them, especially where integration is concerned.

However, as mentioned earlier, activity based teaching is being implemented at an initial level and it now needs to be deepened. More detailed information on exactly how teachers make use of the textbook is required. The issue of greater differentiation between primary and elementary levels also impacts the nature of the textbooks. Finally, given that textbooks are under development for class 7, the training programmes being planned need to reflect this and preparation taken accordingly.

#### *5.2.4 Teaching Learning Material*

TLM workshops have been held at block levels. Teacher support materials and supplementary reading material for different instructional areas too has been developed. TLM grant is disbursed to teachers, though it is often delayed. This affects its effectiveness is at is of greater use in the beginning of the academic year.

The new curriculum and textbooks as well as the training programmes have emphasized TLM use as a critical component of the learning process. Consequently, TLM is visible in most schools, though in varying degrees of quantity and quality. Around half the teachers appear to make use of it at some time during the day, especially in younger classes.

As in the case of transition to active learning, use of TLM is also in a preliminary stage. Materials from the environment are not really being emphasized, with greater importance being given to constructed material. Simpler ways of using what is already available need to be found in order to save undue effort and time on part of the teacher. At the same time, multiple use of existing material, its greater *handling* and manipulation by children (rather than display/demonstration by the teacher) and longer duration activities needs to be ensured.

A particularly encouraging activity that the Mission witnessed was a one-day material development workshop involving parents, community members, children, teachers and resource persons. Apart from generating a greater understanding, ownership and involvement on part of the community and children, this interaction also enables the rapid and large-scale development of material for the school.

#### *5.2.5 Classroom organization*

Teachers have adopted different kinds of seating arrangements, giving children opportunity to interact in different ways. In many instances, children have also begun to undertake responsibility for classroom tasks. Teachers now need to focus on better use of time in order to ensure that students are engaged in learning to as great an extent as possible.

### 5.2.6 *Planning*

Teachers are required to make term-wise / month-wise plans that are then broken into more detailed lesson plans for daily use. The format for both these serves as a useful device that helps teachers well without taxing them. In most instances, these plans have been made, though their utilization tends to remain uneven.

### 5.2.7 *Evaluation*

Evaluation has been seen as an integral part of teaching learning process, with a unit test based system having been put in place. Apart from training, a handbook on evaluation has been provided as support material to teachers. The state has extended this by facilitating a common annual examination across the state, with model question-cum-answer booklets having been developed at the district level by DRG and DIET members. The outcomes of this are being put into a state wide data base to provide a Learning Achievement Tracking System (LATS).

The Mission team identifies this emphasis on evaluation and a systematic approach as a notable feature of SSA efforts. During the field visits it was apparent that unit tests were being conducted in a majority of the schools, with students' performance being recorded, though the recorded format was not common to all schools. A larger issue was that the careful recording of students' performance was not being utilized to focus on those who consistently performed poorly (teachers had no specific plans to address these students) or those whose performance had suddenly fallen (a large number of these were noted). Nor were teachers using the information to identify those curricular objectives where a greater number of students needed more time, and planning accordingly.

Similarly LATS data at the district level faces initial problems in terms of inconsistent data or untenable conclusions being drawn. A greater emphasis on the analytical skills of all involved is clearly required before the potential of LATS is realized.

Finally, from an equity perspective that requires an inclusive and differential, contextual approach, the desirability of a common statewide or district wide test may be questioned. This needs to be discussed by the state team.

### 5.2.8 *School management*

This aspect has not as yet been addressed. Training of school heads, especially in terms of enabling better teaching practices to be implemented on a long term basis is clearly required. The Mission recommends that the state team plan towards this.

## 5.3 *Support Elements*

### 5.3.1 *Teacher training*

A training plan has been drawn up for all categories of teachers. For those newly appointed in formal schools, a 7-day induction training programme has been implemented, focusing on activity-based pedagogy. A second part of this has also been developed. For teachers of upper primary too, a 7-day module has been developed, while a 30-day module has been implemented for SSSs. Training for English teaching has been initiated, with teacher educators having been oriented. Suggestive modules have been developed for pedagogical and content-related hard

spots, to be utilized in a needbased manner. Teleconferencing, feedback from teachers and instructions to DiET faculty to monitoring training programmes for part of the process. Training workshops are often residential, which helps in the learning process.

An analysis of the modules reveals that many of the key ingredients required in active learning are present. However, a greater emphasis on application in the classroom, practice in various categories of activities (and access to a more varied repertoire), and conceptual aspects (critical to teachers being able to develop their own activities) is required. The module covers a larger number of topics than can be addressed with sufficient depth in the given time. There is also no provision for teachers' materials to be provided during / at the end of the training programme.

A larger issue, though, is the lack of a perspective plan over the programme period that would address teachers' need in an evolving manner. In the absence of this, the 20 days provision for training remains under utilized, as has already been the case with those who participated in the first 7-day module for formal school teachers.

Training workshops visited in the field revealed varying degrees of trainer competence. As in the case of teachers, a longer term trainer development, support and monitoring plan needs to be developed. The Mission recommends that a detailed perspective plan be developed for teacher training, and capacity building measures be taken accordingly.

### *5.3.2 Teacher support system*

BRCCs have been recruited from among level-II officers of the Elementary Education Cadre of the state. At present 806 BRCCs have been provided training, of whom 723 have been engaged. CRCCs have been selected from among experienced teachers, and 3947 are already in place as against the 5257 required.

Interaction at various levels and with a number of BRC and CRC personnel has brought forth the very limited role these crucial structures are playing in academic development. Most of their time has been spent on information and management related aspects. Their capacity to bring about quality improvement has not yet been developed, with most not being aware of the exact steps needed to enable a school to improve.

The Mission is of the view that the part time nature of the appointment of CRCCs seriously compromises their ability to undertake their tasks and jeopardizes the investment SSA is making in bringing about quality improvement. It is recommended that the state re-consider this aspect.

### *5.3.3 Institutions and capacity building*

#### Resource groups

Resource groups have been constituted for different interventions at the state, district and block levels. They provide resource in terms of planning, development and implementation of various inputs / interventions involved. Selection of DRG members has taken place through a two-day visioning workshop and 1495 DRG members have been selected across the state, while the number of BRG members is 3647.

The Mission appreciates the creation of such resource groups at various levels as they would ensure inputs and support being available to the teacher on-site. At present these members have been involved in training related activities.

As in the case of the training programme, a clearer and longer term strategy needs to be evolved for the development of these resource groups, in keeping with the perspective plan for training. In addition, these groups would be required to respond to emerging situations as well as to develop new resource persons. Hence putting in place criteria and a mechanism for their ongoing assessment as well as ongoing development is a critical requirement.

#### DIETs and SCERT

Both these institutions are closely involved with SSA. However, their own limited staffing as well as lack of exposure has resulted in mechanistic inputs being provided, though every effort is being made by them to cope with difficult circumstances. A large number of activities are being undertaken at the SCERT and DIET level. However, there is a lack of specificity in the objectives to be achieved by these, and there is no visible connection with quality related targets to be achieved in a phased and time-bound manner.

The Mission recommends that a rapid situation analysis of these institutions be undertaken, and their requirements / action plan be viewed against SSA goals. From this exercise, an institutional development plan may be drawn up.

#### Monitoring institutions

The Mission interacted with the Lead monitoring institution as well as the one for North Orissa. The lead institution has produced quarterly report for 04-05 for the first two quarters. The SPO has not been able to make use of these reports, as some of the findings / methods are also disputed. Both institutions have expressed the need for a monitoring policy, framework and a plan of action to be made jointly with the SPO. Common reporting formats also need to be developed. Monitoring institutions have not had access to MIS data; the DISE data (on which the MIS is based) was made available to the Mission.

#### *5.3.4 Administration and supervision*

The quality improvement efforts being undertaken by the state need to be supported by the administrative and supervisory staff in terms of a common understanding of objectives and processes. The DPCs/Dis/SIs need an academic orientation, and the school observation format needs to be common between CRCCs and SIs.

The Mission learnt that computers are intended to be provided to various staff. Towards this, all personnel need to be trained in the use of these, as well as analysis handling of information / data.

#### *5.3.5 Planning for pedagogical improvement*

Given the large number of activities being undertaken under different interventions, there is a need for clearer linkages across them. As of now, many activities are not being planned in terms of bringing about specific objectives or attaining clearly spelt out changes (e.g. in teacher competencies). It is observed that in the absence of clearly spelt out *quality* targets to be attained in different phases of the project period, the

state is unable to achieve the needed progress. The Mission strongly recommends that such an exercise now be undertaken, as a combined effort of the SCERT / QEU, DIETs and SPO,

#### *5.3.6 Assessment of performance / Monitoring / Evaluation*

Considerable amount of information is now available through various means. Assessment of school performance is being undertaken through a school grading process. The format for school grading, though, needs considerable modification in terms of items included and weightage given to different aspects (at present, wall decoration earns the same points as doing activities).

In addition there is need for assessment of performance of personnel (teachers, school heads, members of the various resource groups, CRCCs, BRCCs) as well as institutions (cluster, blocks, CRCs, BRCs, DIETs and SCERT)

#### *5.3.7 Research*

Research activities have been initiated in SSA and a few studies have been commissioned. Some of these, though, do not really need research studies (e.g. 'hard spots') while areas where research is really needed (e.g. ways of using active learning in multi-grade or multi-lingual contexts) have not found a place. In keeping with the recommended planning process to achieve quality targets, the state would benefit from deriving a research agenda from such a plan.

#### *5.3.8 Innovation*

The Mission observed a number of activities presently being piloted, which have shown encouraging results and the state could expand these in the near future.

### CAE

A computer aided education programme has been launched in 600 schools. Equipment, power connections and training have been provided, with the set up being established on a BOOT basis in order to ensure continued contractor stake in maintenance and reduced down time, a step appreciated by the Mission. Students have started using computers and electronic material on their own, and are comfortable with this. District managers have been providing on-site support.

The project is still to be expanded to the further 300 schools planned for. The Mission was concerned to learn that the House Committee has held this up on grounds of alleged corruption. It is recommended that the issue be cleared as soon as possible in order to enable the planned expenditure to take place.

A preliminary examination of the electronic material shows the tendency to use it as another way of providing explanation rather than creating tasks where children work on their own and learn. Adaptation of APF material to pedagogical / curriculum requirement as well as the Orissa context need much greater attention. The Mission recommends that detailed parameters be drawn up, in keeping with a deeper pedagogical understanding and requirements.

Finally, one way to derive greater benefit from computer aided education would be to equip the DIETs and BRCs for teacher training purposes, especially in terms of self-paced content upgradation.

### Other programmes

An NGO supported programme to empower children on the issue of child rights, formation of a school government, and the involvement of children in educational improvement activities in Sambalpur district has shown excellent results. Children have been greatly enthused and have been taking up a number of constructive activities. The programme requires limited resource inputs and can comfortably be expanded through the various resource groups created.

Similarly, Shiksha Sangam, a short duration project to involve NSS volunteers from universities and colleges in community mobilization and school improvement, as well as Shishu Prativa Utsav, an effort to identify and nurture talent could be usefully expanded.

## 6. Governance

### *6.1 Planning process*

The Mission found that good progress has been made in putting in place an effective bottom-up planning process, with clear evidence that this process is being applied systematically. Micro-planning at habitation level was initiated in September 2004 and there appears to be a high level of consistency in its implementation with all participants in the process being clear about their roles. More intensive support to the micro-planning process has been provided initially on a pilot basis in 106 Gram Panchayats for which GP-level Educational Development Plans are being developed. The Mission suggests that a comparative analysis may be undertaken to assess the extent to which the approach taken in these GPs has led to an improvement in the quality and local responsiveness of Plans.

Anecdotal evidence from field visits suggests that the introduction of micro-planning has resulted in habitation plans that are more context-specific and responsive to local needs, at least with respect to civil works and enrolment initiatives. Further effort is required to achieve greater context-specificity with respect to needed improvements in the quality of teaching.

Whilst bottom-up planning is clearly becoming a reality, it is less clear that the consolidation of habitation plans at Block, District and State levels is being done with sufficient rigour in prioritisation. This is a vital issue given the resource constraints under which SSA is operating. It appears the sole criterion currently being applied for prioritising resource allocation is the ratio of classrooms to pupils, with no systematic prioritisation against other criteria such as educational indicators.

Recommendation: The Mission recommends that a more holistic set of explicit criteria, going beyond classroom/pupil ratios, should be developed and communicated to all links in the planning process to sharpen prioritisation in the allocation of financial and human resources. These should incorporate a focus on lagging schools and blocks, and the setting of time-bound targets for bringing these up to an acceptable level.

During field visits, Mission members came across many instances of a school building (in a reasonably good condition) being replaced by a smaller new building. SSA officials explain that under the norms, new construction is supported while major repairs are not. However, this has resulted in a functional asset being lost, the only playground / play area in the school being used for the new construction, which usually replaces the larger space with a smaller one. There were also instances of the community using the SIG for the *old* building while the school is housed in the new one. Thus, monitoring of SIG utilization (on a sample basis) is required.

In many instances, construction under different projects (OB, MP-LAD / MLA-LAD) has resulted in more facilities that can be made use of. Finally, there are instances where a detailed analysis of the VER data of 0-6 years' children indicates a dramatic decline in the school population over the next few years (primarily due to the opening of more schools / EGS centers). However, these are also schools where new construction is being undertaken.

Encouraging efforts have been made to maximise the achievement of programme targets through convergence with other schemes. Joint Convergence Plans have been prepared in all districts. Significant examples include convergence with Rural Development Dept in provision of include drinking water supply (where the Mission heard that the SSA norm of Rs15,000 per tubewell is less than half the actual cost), with W&C Dept. and Health Dept., and with SC/ST Dept in providing facilities in tribal habitations.

### *6.2 Monitoring & supervision*

A robust system appears to be in place for collecting reliable data on enrolment and out-of-school children at the habitation level. Village Education Registers were maintained and regularly updated in all schools visited by the Mission with household-to-household data collection being carried out by teachers with support from VECs.

The DISE system has been introduced in all 30 districts and from this year covers all schools including those in the private sector. A system is in place for validation of DISE data at various levels – 100% checking by CRCs, 50% by BRCs, 20% at District level and 10% at state level. The Mission was not able to verify how effectively this checking system is working in the context of staffing constraints particularly at Cluster and Block level. However, MIS personnel at both district and state level appear to be of high calibre.

The MIS team at OPEPA has taken some useful initiatives, in particular: (a) introduction of an on-line monitoring system designed to speed up the data reporting process as well as reducing significantly the burden of teachers of the current paper-based reporting system; and (b) piloting of a GIS in one district (Keonjhar) which shows the precise location of every school along with photographs and a range of relevant data. The latter has potential to aid both the planning and monitoring process: replication across the state would cost an estimated Rs 1.25 crore and should be considered based on evaluation of the benefits of the pilot.



### 6.3 *Community participation*

One of the most encouraging aspects of SSA implementation in Orissa has been the extent of genuine community participation, indicating the enthusiasm and latent demand for access to quality education, and bringing strong benefits in terms of accountability and efficiency of resource use. Very good progress has been made in ensuring the establishment and orientation of VECs and in introducing bottom-up planning, as noted above. At the same time, district officials, in particular the DISs have taken efforts to address all complaints of part of community, resulting in greater teacher attendance.

The Mission saw repeated instances of VECs playing very active roles in several aspects including planning, identification and enrolment of out-of-school children, resource mobilisation, and management of schools and civil works. Community participation appears to be high in tribal as well as non-tribal habitations. The functioning of EGS centres in particular is enhanced by strong commitment from local communities which provide accommodation as well as supplying the volunteer teacher. In many of these cases there is a clear expressed desire for these centres to be upgraded to regular schools as soon as possible.

The empowerment of VECs in the context of teachers' leave and salary had led to reservations on the part of the teachers. Subsequently, authorisation of teacher salaries are no longer routed through VECs, though leave applications are.

While teachers have had reservations, that is slowly being overcome in a majority of teachers according to SSA officials. The Mission came across several instances where the cooperation between teachers and community has led to visible improvements. Also, where this relationship has failed to work, the impact of the programme is clearly less.

Given the success achieved till date, the next logical step is to involve the community in quality aspects, as partners of teachers. This includes craftspeople visiting classrooms to share their knowledge (e.g. a carpenter talking of the mathematics of making a table), local officials (such as health worker or patwari-equivalent or CW worker) or community knowledge resources (as in a story teller or a farmer) interacting with children on many aspects related to curriculum.

Community accountability could be further reinforced by adopting the SSA guideline regarding display of financial information at village level. *Recommendation:* (see Financial Management section below).

### 6.4 *Staffing Issues*

The Mission was concerned to note that about 20% of the key positions in Planning, Pedagogy and Finance at the district level remain unfilled. These posts cannot currently be filled following a recruitment ban imposed by the House Committee, which is an issue for concern. Recruitment of suitably qualified staff for these positions will be important to further strengthen the effective implementation of SSA.

In addition, as noted above, the Mission is of the view that the part time nature of the appointment of CRCCs seriously compromises their ability to undertake their tasks and

jeopardizes the investment SSA is making in bringing about quality improvement. It is recommended that the state re-consider this aspect.

More generally the Mission would stress the importance of a reasonable degree of continuity of key personnel especially at state and district level, particularly in view of the complex nature of SSA. Sustained and focused implementation of the programme in a mission mode would be seriously hindered by frequent turnover in key positions.

Recommendation Action should be taken as early as possible to resolve outstanding staffing issues: (i) filling of key vacancies at district level particularly in Planning, Pedagogy and Finance; (ii) appointment of full-time CRCCs and BRCCs; (iii) posting of newly-recruited SSSs.

## 6.5 Financial management

### Funds flow

The Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB for FY 04 - 05) of the state was approved in June 04 for Rs. 640.03 crores (including Rs 64.05 for NPEGEL and Rs. 575.98 as balance for SSA). As per the SSA guidelines this implied a share of Rs. 160.01 crores by the State Government (25%). The initial provision made in the State budget was inadequate.

Since there was a backlog of provision of the State Share for FY03 - 04, full share of the GoI funds was not released on schedule. Therefore the first tranche of Rs. 229 crores (609.47 crores x 75% x 50%) was drastically reduced to Rs. 25 crores; subsequently GoI released a further sum of Rs. 48 crores.

The position of funds received till date is as follows:

	(FY 04 – 05) (Rs. Crores)		
	State	GOI	Total
Approved AWPB			640.03
Opening balance Apr. 04			48.70
Net requirement of the state			591.60
State backlog 03-04	- 28.59		
GoI receipt May 04		25.00	25.00
State receipt May 04	03.95		03.95
State receipt Sept 04	21.80		21.80
GoI Receipt Oct 04		48.07	48.07
State receipt Jan <sup>1</sup> 05	15.12		15.12
	12.28	73.07	113.94
Receipt as % of requirement (113.94/ 591.60)			19%

Additional resources are expected from GOI in Feb 05. It may be mentioned that though there is still a fair amount of uncertainty regarding the timing and quantum of release of funds, the SPO will be responsible for recording expenditure against the same in a fairly short period of time.

<sup>1</sup> Information on the same is not available with GOI till now

The Mission notes that expenditure on Civil Works has been 42.0% (FY 03-04) and 56.2% (FY 04 --05 till Dec 04), a trend that would need to be corrected over the project period. Nevertheless, funding constraints on civil works are real and raise an issue as to how districts are prioritising within the AWPB. The Mission suggested that, in the presence of fund flow constraints, civil works should be prioritised with a view to (a) ensuring timely completion of works taken before initiating new works; and (b) focusing on the poorest/most infrastructurally underdeveloped habitations.

During the field visits, the Mission came across instances where salaries of SSS and EV were in arrear for up to nine months; ostensibly due to a shortage of funds. This is a cause for significant concern because of the impact on motivation of teachers who are in any case low paid, and particularly in the case of SSSs who may not be able to rely on community support.

The state government needs to work out whether it has maintained the expenditure on elementary education, excluding the state share of SSA, at the levels of FY 99-00; this is as per requirements of SSA.

#### *6.6 Accounting/ expenditure reporting for the programme*

##### Findings

- An off-the-shelf accounting software is used at the district level as well as the state level for recording of financial information. This has been in use since April 04 and has improved quality and timeliness of accounting. Though monthly reporting from districts is on a manual basis as of now, it will be converted to electronic transfer of information in the future.
- At the district level all releases to the VEC are recorded as expenditure in books of account. Compliance from VECs is required in form of Utilization Certificates (UCs). As per estimates of the two districts, approximately 20 – 40% of the UCs relating to FY 03 – 04 have come in by December. A 'block-wise register for monitoring of UCs' is maintained but follow up on the same is weak (through BRCC/ CRCC/ SI) and does not result in holding back of further releases.
- Monitoring of VEC/ BRC/ CRC level accounting is weak. Proper/ timely accounting, updation of pass books, bank reconciliation etc. for these entities are not monitored even on a sample basis, though some capacity building measures have been taken, as mentioned separately.

Recommendation Finance and Accounts staff at district level to travel to sub-district level on some days (5 – 8 mandays) each month. These visits to cover BRCs/ CRCs/ schools. Objective of visits to be monitoring as well as guidance for staff on proper book-keeping, banking practices, submission of UCs.

#### *6.7 Banking*

Findings Funds from GOI to state and state to districts are transferred electronically through specific arrangements with certain banks. These reduce time/ cost in transfer of funds. Based on a similar framework, district offices have been negotiating with banks having sufficient presence at the district levels with adequate coverage of the rural areas. Similar arrangements have already been put in place in a majority of the districts of the state. Funds to schools, BRCs, CRCs are transferred through the

banking channels and handling of cheques (preparation, handing over, deposit, clearing) eliminated.

At the state and district offices, bank reconciliations are usually done on a regular basis.

Recommendation While efficient banking arrangements should be encouraged, it would need to be ensured that the 'preferred' bank branch is located at a reasonable distance from each school, CRC and BRC.

#### *6.8 Audit*

Findings SPO has appointed auditors at two levels; state as well as district level. The 30 districts have been equally divided among 5 auditors with one of them also functioning as the lead auditor. Selection of auditors had been initiated by issue of advertisement, short-listing and selection. Local presence was one of the criteria for selection of the district auditors while experience/ competence was the key criteria for selection of the lead auditor. Appointment has been made for one year with possible extension of two years, based on performance. Audit has been as per Terms of Reference as laid down in the Manual. *Internal Audit* is conducted by a two member team which is responsible to travel to districts for review.

Recommendation In addition to their current responsibilities, Internal audit may be asked to conduct focused reviews based on issues identified by the SPO.

#### *6.9 Manual on Financial Management and Procurement*

Findings A draft of the Manual was shared by GOI with all the states in end 03; consequently two review meetings were held (participants: MoHRD, Edcil, Financial Controllers of all states) to obtain feedback/ issue clarifications as the case may be. As a result of the deliberations, a revised Manual has been issued to the states in May 04. This has been approved/ adopted by the SPO and training/ awareness on the same provided to district level staff. At the sub-district level, though the entire Manual has not been provided, the state has been issuing necessary (and much simplified) guidelines for accounting.

#### *6.10 Procurement*

Findings Procurement plan for the state has been prepared and approved in Sept 04. Separate plans are in place for civil works and for other items. Actuals against the plan are monitored through the preparation/ submission of QPRs. The Mission was informed that as part of the audit, procurement aspects were looked into by the Auditors.

#### *6.11 Staffing, Training and Capacity Building*

Findings In general, the state is following the staffing norms as laid down in the Manual. This includes a three member team at the districts level which is considered sufficient. Vacancies exist in certain instances and need to be filled up on a priority basis.

District level staff is provided guidance/ problem solving support through quarterly review meetings at the state. These are held over a two day period. District level staff

have built awareness, mostly among the BRC coordinators regarding principle of good financial management.

Recommendation Elementary guidance is required to be given to the School Head Master regarding maintenance of basic, simple accounting records. This may be accomplished by training the BRC coordinators as trainers.

#### 6.12 Village Level Transparency

Findings Guidelines for display of basic financial information at village level have not been implemented in a focused manner in the state. The same are required as per paragraph 97 of the Manual on Financial Management and Procurement. Information on funds/ expenditure was not displayed in the schools visited in the two districts; the Mission was informed that some schools have, in fact, displayed this information.

Recommendation To ensure transparency in reporting basic information on position of funds should be prominently displayed in the school/ village. A format may be developed and used across the state, with amounts being updated as and when required by writing in chalk.

### 7. Key Recommendations

1. In light of the fact that great progress is observed in terms of access and equity, the main challenge of SSA shifts towards quality issues. Towards this, OPEPA should organise the following before May 2005:
  - a. A perspective workshop on Active Learning, in particular its application to the elementary level. (This workshop would utilize preliminary research data already available about teachers' implementation of activity-based teaching learning practices in the classroom. It would also initiate conceptualisation of a more inclusive approach towards the education of all children. The outcomes of this workshop should inform the key inputs to be provided.)
  - b. An intensive review cum planning workshop at the state level. The outcomes would include:
    - a detailed analysis of the status of quality aspects (using the understanding developed in the perspective workshop mentioned above),
    - identification of key inputs, capacity building and processes required,
    - setting of phased / incremental targets and plans for achieving these during the project periodleading up to universalisation of *quality* elementary education.
2. Supervision and monitoring should at all levels – cluster, block, district and state – be directed towards the weakest schools/clusters/blocks, and identify strategies towards their improvement. More systematic planning of supervision visits will help to ensure that all schools, clusters etc are covered with some regularity.
3. Rigorous evaluation should be undertaken at an appropriate stage of the impact and cost-effectiveness of the many interventions for target groups (girls, SC, ST

and children with special needs) and the strategy for these groups refined and streamlined accordingly. This process should be completed within 2 years; evaluation design and baseline data collection should begin now.

4. Action should be taken as early as possible to resolve outstanding staffing issues: (i) filling of key vacancies at district level particularly in Planning, Pedagogy and Finance; (ii) appointment of full-time CRCCs and BRCCs; (iii) posting of newly-recruited SSSs.
5. Finance and Accounts staff at district level to travel to sub-district level, i.e., BRCs/ CRCs/ schools to monitor as well as guide staff on proper book-keeping, banking practices, submission of UCs. Elementary guidance is required to be given to the School Head Master regarding maintenance of basic, simple accounting records. This may be accomplished by training the BRC coordinators as trainers.
6. To ensure transparency in reporting basic information on position of funds should be prominently displayed in the school/ village. A format may be developed and used across the state, with amounts being updated as and when required by writing in chalk.

**INDIA**  
**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN**  
**FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION**

**PUNJAB STATE REPORT**  
**(January 27 – February 3, 2005)**

**1. Introduction**

On behalf of the First Joint Review Mission (JRM) of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Atindra Sen (GOI) and Venita Kaul (WB) visited Punjab from January 27 to February 3, 2005 to review the status of the project as per the development objectives of the project viz.(a) reduction in number of out of school children and increase in enrolment;(b)narrowing of gender and social equity gaps and (c)improvement in quality of elementary education and learning levels of children. In the context of these objectives, the Mission focused specifically on the terms of reference for the JRM which were to (i) review progress against district plan approvals and GOI budget allocations (b) review overall program implementation(c) review financial management and safeguard related aspects and (iv) identify any studies required to be undertaken to inform further program implementation.

The Mission in the course of its visit to Punjab, interacted with the State Project Director (SPD) and his team, the Chairman and Secretary of the Punjab School Examination Board, Director SCERT, and a faculty member of the Department of Education, Punjab University in charge of program monitoring. The Mission visited two districts, Kapurthala and Nawanshaher to observe project activities at the field level. While in the district, the Mission interacted with the Deputy Commissioner and the Additional Deputy Commissioner, District Education Officers and their team and staff of the District Program office. In addition the Mission visited 13 formal schools of varying grades and 3 Education Guarantee Centers (EGS) and two *anganwadis* in the two districts. The Mission interacted with the students, teachers and instructors and members of the Village Education Development Committees and parents. The Mission visited the District Institute of Education (DIET) in Kapurthala where it interacted with the faculty. In addition the Mission visited a Block Resource Center and interacted with a group of Block Resource Persons. The conclusions of the JRM were shared in a meeting chaired by the Principal Secretary, Department of Education, Government of Punjab on February 3, 2005. The Mission would like to place on record its deep appreciation of the cooperation and courtesy extended to it by the State Project Director and his team and the District officials throughout this visit.

The Mission was always aware of the fact that Punjab was not a part of the DPEP and therefore was at a different stage of development as far as capacity to run a project of this nature is concerned. Moreover, for various reasons, the first year of the program was what has been commonly referred as a 'zero year' in which no activities could be undertaken. In the circumstances, overall the Mission was able to observe a definite momentum in the implementation of the SSA program at both the state and district levels. The villages and urban slums visited bore evidence of SSA interventions, largely in terms of civil works which were of good quality, and greater availability of teachers (on contract basis). Both of these interventions are being appreciated by the community and being attributed to the SSA. In at least two instances, SSA has gone where no government program has gone before: to an island in the river Sutlej where all men and materials had to be moved by boat and to a cluster of huts of Bihari migrant labour where an EGS center is running successfully with over 80 children. At the same time, there seems to also be a continuing trend on the part of parents to send their children to private schools if they can afford it. The result is the significantly low teacher pupil ratio in many of the government schools visited, both primary and upper primary.

## 2. Access and Enrolment

*Educational profile:* Punjab comprises 17 districts which include 141 community development blocks, 1517 clusters and 18,882 village education development committees (VEDCs). The VEDCs have been constituted under the SSA. Punjab's female literacy rate is 63.4 percent against the overall literacy rate of 69.7 percent but the more disturbing indicator is the gender ratio which is 876, with it being further reduced to 793 for the 0-6 age group. Table 1 gives the demographic profile of children in the age group of 6-14 years in the state together with the enrolment and number of government schools.

**TABLE 1: ACCESS AND ENROLMENT**

<b>Primary</b>					
Gender	Population 6-11	Enrolment 6-11	No. of Schools	Pupil School Ratio	Pupil Class Ratio
Boys	1258075	757358			
Girls	1044799	774458			
Total	2302874	1531816	13341	114.82	22.96
<b>Upper Primary</b>					
Gender	Population 11-14	Enrolment 11-14	No of Schools	Pupil School Ratio	Pupil Class Ratio
Boys	583557	554981			
Girls	513300	463762			
Total	1096857	1018743	5541	183.85	61.28

In addition, there are 82207 children enrolled in EGS centres all over the state



About 64,997 children are currently reported out of school in October, 2004 using the survey data of 2002 as a base, with the maximum incidence reported in Ferozepur (19891) followed by Amritsar (9793) Sangrur (7436), Patiala (6276) and Mukatsar (5094). The data validity is an issue still in the state since the EMIS system is still evolving, but there is agreement in terms of the districts identified where the problem is of greater magnitude. These districts need more focused attention in the next annual plan, with a repeat household survey to assess exact numbers out of school/drop outs and reasons thereof, and planning of more need based interventions to get them into school. These districts would also need closer monitoring of the program implementation by the state.

*Physical facilities and civil works:* Access in terms of availability of schools is not a major problem in the state in terms of the state norms of 1 km. norm for primary and 1.5 km norm for upper primary schools. The total number of government primary schools in the state is 13,341 and upper primary schools are 5541 which results in a ratio of 1 upper primary: 2.4 primary schools compared to the SSA norm of 1:2. In thirteen of the seventeen districts, every village has a school, though occasionally this may be more than 1 km away from a habitation. Coverage of upper primary schools is however, not universal in all villages across the 17 districts. Good roads and connectivity exists for most villages. However, electricity supply is erratic and available for a few hours only. Consequently, access may still be an issue in some pockets but such problems are the exception rather than the rule.

In terms of facilities, what strikes one most is the availability of large spaces in almost every school visited. Most schools have compound walls and enough space for play grounds but we did not see a single instance of provision of swings, or anything else for play and recreation activities. Kho Kho is a popular game in Punjab and requires minimal equipment but there are no kho kho poles to be found in any school visited by the team. It is felt that the available spaces should be used much more fruitfully to provide extra curricular activities. Such activities have the advantage of enhancing regularity of school participation and quality of the learning processes by making the school program more attractive and child centered. Schools may also be encouraged to plant some trees and perennial plants in the school compounds with the help of children and the community which will not only make the school environment attractive but also provide an opportunity for 'hands on learning' for children across various curricular areas.

Under the project while no new schools have been opened, the existing school facilities have been strengthened through construction of 2114 additional classrooms, 7887 toilets and drinking water facilities and construction of 85 new school buildings and 65 for building less schools. In addition, 27 school verandahs and 29 head masters' rooms have also been constructed. The quality of construction was found to be very good and the involvement of VEDC s was seen as a positive feature in not only encouraging community involvement and monitoring but also community contribution. The unit cost of construction is also commonly perceived to have come down as an outcome of community involvement.

*Teachers and Teacher –Pupil ratio:* While availability of schools and space in schools is generally not an issue in the state, a major observation is the very low teacher pupil ratio and consequently an adverse teacher-grade ratio in the schools. While there are more than 20,000 vacancies of primary teachers, the PTR based on existing enrolments and number of teachers in position works out to a 45:1 which is quite favourable. This was also confirmed during the visits to the schools where the pupils per teacher in many schools was found to be even less. In fact, in most of the schools with smaller enrolment figures, the need of the hour is more teachers trained in the skills required for multi-grade teaching. Therefore, while the ideal goal may be to achieve a one teacher to each grade ratio, this does not seem to be a viable goal in view of the very small number of children in each grade. The reason of declining enrolment, other than demographic is an increasing migration to and preference for private schools across the state which is reported to be almost 30 percent. The state is well aware of the issue and is considering appointment of teachers as well as alternative approaches, including encouraging private participation.

### **3. Social and Gender Equity**

*Gender Equity:* The data reported by the state shows unfavourable gender ratio overall but school enrollment in the primary stage does not reflect any bias against girls. As against 94.77% boys in school in the 6-14 age group, the girls' percentage is 95.08 based on the population figures. The gap is somewhat evident at the upper primary stage where in the percentage of boys in the 11-14 age group enrolled is 95.1 percent as compared to 90.3 percent of girls. The issue of girls' education is thus more localized in some districts and is not all pervasive. According to the GOI guidelines, the state has identified 13 blocks across 7 districts with 4 schools per block, where the female literacy is low to implement the NPEGEL scheme of the SSA. The districts have reported some amount of construction work and appointment of teachers in some cases to teach vocational skills under the scheme.

ECCE Kit: Under the SSA provision of innovation the state has in consultation with the Department of Social Welfare proposed procurement of a kit at the state level to be supplied to all anganwadis to strengthen the preschool education component. The kit which is costed at approximately Rs. 3000/-per set has been developed with the guidance of NCERT and contains stimulating and child friendly material for children. The Mission visited two anganwadis, both of which already had some material of a similar nature and found that they are lying unused. When asked, the anganwadi worker brought them out of their storage box. Evidently, the more effective input for improving quality would be ensuring proper use of the material through training and monitoring. The Mission discussed this issue with the officials of the Social Welfare Department that there is a possibility of duplication that must be avoided. The Department officials agreed that as a first step, a joint survey would be conducted by both departments to identify specific needs in terms of materials, training and monitoring and plan on that basis. The possibility of relocating Anganwadis to primary school premises, given the land space available, and also adding this component to the EGS was discussed. The kits could be

very well utilized as school readiness material, if prepared in a graded way, by children in grades 1 and 2 as well as in EGS centers for whom the same methodology is advocated.

*Social Equity:* The overall SC population according to the data provided by the state is 28.8 percent of the total population. However, in the absence of data on SC population in the age group, it is not possible to estimate the percentage of SC enrolment and the gap. The data on enrolment in government schools indicates that 50.7 % of the students belong to Scheduled Castes at the primary level. The corresponding figure for upper primary is 38.8%. The Mission visited three EGS centers and a branch school in an island which bore evidence of the way in which the SSA is reaching out to the so far marginalized children. The response of the community was really overwhelming

*Children with special needs:* The state has constituted a State Resource Group for planning and implementation of the IED component of the plan and monitor progress. The districts have gone through a process of identification of children with special needs through assessment camps organized in convergence with ALIMCO and District Red Cross societies, NGOs and relevant departments. The assessment has been extended to 3-6 year olds as well which is a very good initiative since it will enable early detection. The process of procurement of assistive devices, aids and appliances is now being initiated in convergence with various agencies including ALIMCO, DDRCs and Red Cross. This component is also being included in the 20 days' training module of teachers and the community members and parents of children are also proposed to be sensitized. This is being planned in collaboration with IGNOU and RCI under the 'innovation' component. The state is also proposing to develop useful vocational training courses for children with varying types of disabilities in collaboration with PSSCIVE, Bhopal and discussions are on with Punjab School Education Board to make concessions and relaxations for these children. The Mission had an opportunity to visit a NGO run school for deaf and dumb and mentally challenged children. This was a very noble venture on the part of the NGO and the children were seen to be improving and learning. The Mission recommends that programs like these could be considered as bridge programs to prepare children with basic skills to be able to later take full advantage of inclusive education later. Programs like these could continue to serve as support programs for children even when they are in school.

### **Improving Quality**

*Classroom practice:* Overall, the Mission observed that the children in the schools visited seemed to be learning, though not always at the appropriate grade level. The Mission was informed that the state has a policy of board examinations at grades 5, 8 and 10/12. The examinations for grade 8 and after are conducted by the Punjab School Education Board while the grade 5 examination is conducted by SCERT. The Board reported a 70 % pass rate at grade 8 while SCERT reported 95 % in grade 5. The schools also conduct in-class monthly/quarterly assessments, but the Mission did not get to see any progress cards in the schools.

In terms of classroom practice, there is a large scope for improvement. The practice is still very traditional and focused on rote learning. The text book is the sole

material seen being used. There was no evidence of accompanying /in built workbooks. There is little evidence that teachers have made any lesson plans, and instruction seems to be carried out in a random manner without much thought to proper sequencing. A compounding factor is that due to shortage of teachers as well as compulsion to get all teachers to complete 20 days of training, there is considerable mobility of teachers as they are deputed to different schools. Also due to multi grade and occasional single teacher situations with large classes, the teachers are unable to plan in a continuous and focused manner. While most schools reported having received the teacher grant of Rs. 500/- this is being used largely to prepare charts which have been pasted on the walls. Undoubtedly, they make the classrooms more interesting, though the charts are often way above the eye level of children. But the TLM was not seen being used actively in any classroom visited. There was no evidence of joyful learning or activity based teaching and learning. For this, there is need to develop child friendly activity/work books to accompany textbooks in order to facilitate self learning and increase time on task. Interestingly, even the senior officials of the department who accompanied the Mission did not seem to be aware of the need to change or the advantages of activity based, joyful learning.

*Training:* Training on a large scale is needed to change teacher attitudes away from this teacher centered rote learning. The state has planned and conducted 20 days of annual training for every teacher through in-service programs conducted by Block Resource persons and DIET faculty. The training covers 12 days of academic inputs and 8 days of administrative training. The administrative training is a joint training of BRPs, VDC members and teachers and focuses on Community mobilization, gender issues, ECCE, IED, financial accounting, utilizations of grants and record keeping. The academic component is largely focused on teaching of different subjects. Almost all teachers we interacted with at the primary stage reported having undergone the 20 days' training. Two specific issues arise in this context. (i) Since the training is held in a number of installments the teaching gets disrupted since teachers are either undergoing training or standing-in for those on training. This is in addition to other non sectoral responsibilities that come to the teachers, as reported by teachers themselves, which may impede efficient and effective teaching in schools. (ii) The training was completed for all teachers in the districts due to decentralization to block level which is very commendable. However, with understaffed DIETs and inadequate preparation of the BRPs and other resource persons, the quality of training cannot be ensured. More than training, there is a need to provide on site academic support to the schools which is not evident at all. The BRPs appear to carry out more administrative tasks like collection of information rather than provide academic supervision to the schools. The Mission recommends that the program staff of the state visit some DPEP states for exposure to the tried and tested chain of academic support systems, namely from DIET through BRCs to the CRCs to the schools, and also to observe the school grading system in use. This chain of support is critical to improve quality of education at the elementary stage and would need formulation of a common vision and capacity building at all levels from SCERT, through DIETs to sub district level structures.

## School Infrastructure and Civil Works:

Rural Punjab enjoys excellent connectivity compared to many states and all the schools visited in the two districts had all weather roads leading to them. The physical infrastructure is excellent or very good in most places visited. Most schools have boundary walls and are well laid out with adequate space for circulation and games within the school compound. However, the utilization of the available open spaces for games and activities can be much greater than what it is now. The cumulative progress of civil works undertaken in SSA is given below:

**Table 2: Progress of Civil Works**

No.	Type of Work	Cumulative Target as per Plan till FY 04-05	Cumulative Target as per Releases till FY 04-05	Achievement against Plan (%)	Achievement against Releases (%)
1.	BRC	130	106	40.00	49.06
2.	CRC	493	97	15.21	77.32
3.	New School Building/Branch School	174	132	48.85	64.39
4.	Building less School	205	86	31.71	75.58
5.	Additional classrooms	5931	2722	35.64	77.66
6.	Toilets Urinals and Drinking Water	18049	9298	43.70	84.82
7.	Verandah	125	27	21.60	100
8.	Headmaster Room for Upper Primary	304	29	9.54	50.00

The progress is quite satisfactory and the quality of work is very good to excellent. There has been some cost escalation due to adopting higher standards than what is specified. In many instances the rooms are larger and the verandahs in front of classrooms are wider than what is provided in the norms. What is heartening to observe is the extent and strength of community support. The extra costs have been invariably met by the community but we did not encounter a single instance of the community members asking for any compensation for the extra work they have funded on their own. Even in a relatively poorer village of 'bazigars' visited by the team, there has been substantial contribution by the community.

The construction work has been executed by the VEDCs, in keeping with the guidelines of SSA on decentralization and local participation. This is perhaps the reason for the strong sense of ownership and pride exhibited by the residents. Though the norms do not provide for it, in all cases where money was sanctioned for providing drinking water, the community has installed submersible pumps at great expense to provide

continuous and uninterrupted supply of drinking water. This strong sense of ownership and commitment is a great asset and needs to be nurtured carefully so that other activities in SSA receive similar community support. The Mission was informed that the EC has taken a decision to entrust the civil works in SSA to the gram panchayats. The Missions, however, recommends that this decision needs to be reviewed and that there should be no departure from the well established principles of community ownership envisaged in entrusting the civil works to the VEDC, which is the underlying spirit of the SSA. This view was shared by all sections including teachers and government functionaries at the local level.

Without intending to sound too critical, we observed that there is a need for more child centric planning and execution: e.g. toilet bowls and washbasins are at a height suitable for adults but too high for most children. The notice boards which have been put up as a component of social audit, however, do not always indicate the amount of community contribution. This amount is sizeable in many instances and needs to be recorded in order to inform the local residents of what has gone into building their schools.

### **Staffing Issues**

The state and district offices are now adequately staffed. Staff has been drawn from two sources: from the existing teachers in the education department on deputation and from the market on short term contractual appointments. By and large, staff is enthusiastic and motivated and the younger consultants are particularly well qualified; MBAs and CAs having been recruited recently. However, such staff needs to gain domain expertise to be effective since their past experience in the sector is in most cases minimal. Also, unlike other states, Punjab does not have the experience of the DPEP. Staff at managerial and planning levels will do well to visit some other states to observe some of the better practices and innovative approaches that have emerged after the experience of DPEP. The Mission was informed that SSA Authority staff has undergone training in the National Institute for Administrative Research, Mussoorie and at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi. Moreover, training programs are also specifically designed and conducted for the staff from time to time with the help of experts from IGNOU, NIEPA and NCERT.

The Mission noted that SSA has been able to put in place necessary staffing structures for implementation. However, there is a concern on our part that all existing institutions and their field formations may have not been integrated sufficiently. For instance, due to historical reasons, textbooks are prepared by the Punjab School Education Board and also printed by them. We were informed that the SSA Authority has recently obtained the manuscripts from the PSEB by paying 1% royalty and then outsourced the printing. These books have been called SSA textbooks and are sought to be differentiated from those prepared by PSEB. SPD was understandably proud that these books are printed on better paper and still cost less than the books prepared by the PSEB. The Mission feels that one of the goals of SSA is that it seeks convergence and coordination of all formations and institutions working towards a common goal of universalisation of elementary education rather than to treat it as a stand-alone project.

The SSA Authority may therefore consider greater interaction with the staff of the line departments and efforts may be made to draw upon their experience and expertise, wherever appropriate. Moreover, there is a need to draw personnel with expertise from wherever possible to support particular functions. For instance, the most appropriate person to be entrusted with the work of gender sensitization issues may be available outside the education department in some other department or even in a local NGO. The SSA Authority may consider appointing the best available talent from all possible sources, both inside and outside government departments

In the past, many states have benefited from awareness building before launching particular interventions, not only among the public but also among the staff of government departments. A heightened sense of awareness and involvement in a mission mode needs to be created in the state so that all sections view SSA as an opportunity to meet specific targets. The awareness campaign can also play an important part in role definition for all staff, including school level and field personnel, many of whom are unaware about all the dimensions of SSA that are working towards the objective of universalization of elementary education. For instance, BRPs in position were found to view their roles more as providing administrative support rather than academic support. They have been assigned different component responsibilities as in district staff in DPEP and they visit schools but more to exchange information rather than to counsel on academic matters. There is thus a need to strengthen both the mechanism for providing academic support to teachers in schools as well the human resources available for providing this important function.

The state has more than one category of teachers. First, there are the regularly appointed teachers who predate the SSA. Against 48557 sanctioned posts in primary, there are 34652 teachers in position. In the upper primary section, against the sanctioned strength of 35707, there are 28958 teachers in position. Thus there is a large shortfall of 13905 and 6749 teachers in the primary and upper primary sections or an overall shortfall of 20654 teachers. This shortfall has to be seen in the context of the commitment of the state to maintain its real investment in elementary education at the 1999-2000 level. In fact, this is a precondition for release of funds from the Centre under SSA. Our understanding is that this precondition has not been fully met by the state government.

The project has made provision for appointment of contract teachers locally by the VEDC. These contract teachers have completed the ETT training and are paid a consolidated sum of Rs. 5000 per month. Such contractual appointments are made wherever there is an acute shortage. If a teacher is selected to work elsewhere for the SSA as BRPs or other project staff, two contract teachers are appointed for one regular teacher withdrawn from a school. If ETT trained teachers are not available, those with some basic academic qualifications are appointed locally but at different rates of compensation depending on their qualifications. Thus graduates receive a consolidated sum of Rs. 2500 per month, graduates with B.Ed training receive Rs. 3000 per month and post graduates receive Rs. 3500 per month. However, these arrangements can only mitigate the problem posed by large number of teacher vacancies in the state. Since SSA can only support additional teachers over and above the numbers in sanctioned posts prior to the start of SSA, it will be difficult for the state to justify indefinitely additional recruitment of para

teachers on contract under SSA while keeping a large number of sanctioned posts unfilled. The Mission has been given to understand that the Government of Punjab has now constituted a high powered committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Chief Minister to go into all issues of education reforms including issues related to teacher recruitment to fill existing vacancies in the state.



The overall position of para teachers in the state is given in the table below:

**Table 3: District Wise Deployment of Para Teachers**

Sr. No.	District	ETT Trained, Contractual Appointments	Education Volunteers (Not ETT Trained)
1	Amritsar	153	267
2	Bathinda	89	185
3	Faridkot	88	21
4	Fatehgarh Sahib	85	163
5	Ferozpur	119	283
6	Gurdaspur	131	55
7	Hoshiarpur	125	26
8	Jullandhar	121	58
9	Kapurthala	96	124
10	Ludhiana	138	231
11	Mansa	92	514
12	Moga	92	257
13	Mukatsar	94	118
14	Nawanshahr	91	28
15	Patiala	122	11
16	Ropar	104	316
17	Sangrur	128	421
<b>Total</b>		<b>1868</b>	<b>3078</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>4946</b>

It can be seen from the above that even after the appointment and deployment of para teachers, the shortfall due to vacancies in the cadre of teachers is significantly large. Since SSA can only be utilized for funding additional teacher positions, including para teachers, there is no alternative except to fill up the vacancies of teachers. Existing vacancies of teachers cannot be fully compensated by appointing para teachers, even if the qualifications and training of the two categories are interchangeable.

The effect of this is seen in the schools we visited. It was a rare instance in which a school had its full complement of teachers, including para teachers on contractual appointments. The shortfall of teachers, subsequent rationalization and deployment of

para teachers have to be analyzed together in respect of the overall effect on equity. For instance, we visited two schools some 2.5 kilometers apart with very different teacher deployment. In Bir Kathgarh (Balachor Block, Nawanshahr District) for 28 children enrolled in classes 1-5, there are 2 teachers who have been appointed on contract. In the neighboring village of Mahmoodpur Mandhaher, there are 88 students and only one (regular) teacher. It was not clear what the basis for this kind of lopsided deployment was. The problem is not an isolated one. By and large, as is the experience elsewhere, the effect of teacher shortage is greater inequity as urban and more prosperous areas tend to feel the effect less than rural and more backward areas.

Education volunteers are being posted to run the EGS centers set up under the SSA. However, the basis of the distinction between new schools, branch schools, buildingless schools and new EGS centers is unclear to the Mission. The SPD clarified that the distinction between branch school and building less schools is a legacy of past administrative practices and in reality, both are the same.

The nomenclature of branch school does not find a place in the SSA framework because wherever there are sufficient numbers of out of school children as per the norms of SSA (currently 40) within 1.5 km of an existing school, a new school must be established to provide access and meet the needs of the children for education. One EGS center in village Kanon in Aur Block of Nawanshahr District, we found as many as 88 children. There is no school within even two kilometers of the Center and yet no new school or branch school has been established. In contrast, the school at Bir Kathgarh which has only 28 students has been described as a branch school and also benefited from the sanction and construction of two rooms. The criteria adopted by the state under SSA needs to be clearly delineated.

### **Institutions for Teacher Training**

Teacher training is an integral part of SSA and quality education requires that teachers are trained at the time of induction and thereafter, on a periodic basis. The institutional arrangement for teacher training at the district level is the DIET. Both the districts visited by the Mission had institutions in place. However, in order to be effective, there is a need for greater attention to governance of the DIETs. The DIET Kapurthala operates from its own building, which appears to be an old residence from state times which was not originally meant for its present use. The building is therefore not quite functional. Of greater concern is that it is in rather poor condition and cannot be expected to provide a proper setting for the DIET's operations in the future. A separate, half completed building also is being used. The reason for non completion of the building, including the planned hostels for trainees is unclear to the Mission members.

There are some 17 faculty members in the Kapurthala DIET but the post of the Head is vacant. There is also a serious issue of delayed payment of salaries to the DIET staff, which at the time of this report is five months. Needless to say, the levels of motivation among DIET staff cannot be expected to be very high. The Mission was given to understand that the delay is due to administrative reasons not connected with SSA. We

are constrained to note that the matter needs immediate attention so that it is sorted out quickly and DIET staff can play a more effective role in the SSA.

The last two batches of ETT qualified teachers from DIETs in the state are yet to be recruited by the government. In fact, at the time of the visit, there were reports of an agitation by the unemployed ETT graduates in the state. It therefore appears that the inability to fill the large number of vacancies of teachers is not attributable to a supply side problem.

Post induction training is for a total period of 20 days, but this is made up of shorter periods for particular components. Various components have been incorporated such as issues relating to Minimum Levels of Learning (5 days), Planning (3 days), Evaluation (5 days), Development of TLM (5 days), EGS (1 day), and issues relating to VEDC (1 day). However, it was not clear to the Mission what the concept of MLL being followed is. The effectiveness of training may be considerably enhanced in case the training is residential and self contained modules of longer duration are designed. This will also require creation of sufficient infrastructure.

For upper primary teachers, there are separate In Service Training centers which are located in all 12 of the old districts. The newly formed districts do not have their own ISTs. Both DIETs and ISTs report to the SCERT. In our interaction with the Director SCERT we were informed that there is a proposal to establish 5 more ISTs in districts where they do not exist. However, it is not apparent to us why the entire needs of elementary teachers cannot be met through DIETs as is the general practice in other states.

Unlike most states, the SCERT is not in charge of textbook renewal and development. This task has been entrusted to the Punjab State Education Board, which also decides the syllabi and conducts examinations at the 10 and plus 2 levels. This arrangement means that the synergy between content and pedagogy is unrealized and the two elements are independent of each other. It is felt that this issue requires a close re-examination and review in view of the obvious advantages of integrating training and content development. The SSA Authority and the Government of Punjab may like to revisit these issues as soon as possible.

### **Monitoring and Research**

Punjab University, Chandigarh has been designated as the institution in the state which will provide monitoring and research services. Three reports have been prepared and two have been submitted by now but they have not been shared with the SSA Authority in the state. In future these reports will be shared with the SSA Authority. However, it appears that the reports shared with the Mission are impressionistic in nature without adequate analysis that may be of some use in taking remedial actions. Research Committee at the state level has not been set up and so research is also not being taken up.

## Financial Management and Procurement

All the district offices are fully staffed with qualified persons in position who may or may not be necessarily experienced. However, they have all received one days training in a cascade model from state level staff in use of the Financial and Procurement Manual. A need was expressed for more training and guidance. The fund flow was reported to be smooth and no delays were experienced at any level. The amount for salaries and grants is sent by the district office to the BEO by Bank draft to avoid delays and reduce transaction costs and they in turn issue cheques to the VEDC who make the final payments. Since there is no procurement at the district level no plan was prepared.

The following table shows the financial details of sanctions, releases and expenditure under SSA against the AWP 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

**Table 4: Utilization of Funds**

Year	Spillover (lakhs)	Sanctioned (lakhs)	AWPB (lakhs)	Expenditure (lakhs)	Percentage against AWPB
2003-04	2088.7	17969.2	20057.8	4442.48	22.15
2004-05	4984.4	15050.6	20034.9	1990.89	9.94

By all accounts, this reveals an unusually low level of expenditures, particularly in 2004-2005. While some expenditure may be booked in the remaining period of the financial year, the overall situation is unlikely to show much change. The SSA Authority has reported that this low level of expenditure has been due to reasons beyond its control. In the earlier part of the financial year, release of funds was withheld by GOI because the state contribution of even the previous year had not been received by the SSA Authority. By the time the state share was released and received by the Authority, the GOI's budget allocations ran out, thus further delaying the release of central contribution. GOI has now released its grant for 2004-2005 but there is very little time available for its effective utilization.

The SPD also informed the Mission that the comments and observations on the IPAI Report are being finalized and will be sent to the Government of India soon. The Mission therefore did not pursue the matter.

### Next Steps

The Mission recommends the following next steps in the near future:

1. Teacher recruitment to fill vacant posts should be completed as soon as possible, after rationalization across districts is done. This may facilitate changing over to a district cadre, as has been done in several states successfully.

2. Project staff may be deputed on study tours to other DP&EP states to observe the systems in place providing on site academic support to teachers.

3. The decision to entrust civil works to gram panchayats instead of VEDCs needs to be reviewed so that the civil works continue to be entrusted to the VEDCs to ensure community involvement and promote community ownership. This will also help in drawing upon community resources on a voluntary basis which is strength of the state.

4. The household level data needs to be updated because the existing data has major shortcomings and also is now out of date. Bottom up planning will be effective only if updated data is available to reflect the varying requirements of the districts. This will also help in effective targeting.

5. There is a need to develop multi-grade teaching skills in the course of teacher training. This is especially important because declining enrolments and resultant small grade sizes are creating situations in which multi-grade teaching would be the most appropriate strategy.

**INDIA**  
**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN**  
**FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION**  
**TAMIL NADU STATE REPORT**

(January 26-February 3,2005)

**1.0. Introduction**

- 1.1. The first SSA joint review mission team consisting of Dr. I.V. Subba Rao, Team Leader of the Joint Review mission, Mr. Sushil Kumar Bahl, Senior Procurement Specialist at the World Bank Office in India and Mr. Jos Jonckers, Principal Administrator at the EuropeAid Office of the European Commission in Brussels, visited Tamilnadu from 26 January to 3 February, 2005. The aim of the mission was to track progress with respect to achieving SSA objectives and indicators. i.e. on expanding access, equity, quality and governance in elementary education provision in the State.
- 1.2. At the State level, the team had intensive discussions with the State Project Director and the personnel at the State Project office, the Municipal Corporation of Chennai, Anna University and several non-governmental organisation working across the State (e.g. Spastics Society of Tamilnadu). The team also visited Coimbatore and Salem districts where it interacted with the Chief Education Officers and their team. The mission visited the DIET in Salem and approximately 14 elementary schools (of which one was an unannounced visit), 3 Education Guarantee Scheme Schools, 3 ECCE/pre-schools, 2 residential camps, 4 BRC and CRCs and 5 Inclusive Education Programs. The team interacted with DIET, BRC, CRC personnel and trainees, the teachers and students in the schools, the parents, the community, PTA members and the members of the Village Education Committees and NGOs involved in SSA-supported schemes.
- 1.3. The mission appreciates the extensive documentation and database provided during its visits and which facilitated the mission to assess the implementation process. The mission would like to thank the Education Secretary, State Project Director and his entire team at the State, District block and village levels for facilitating the field visits and interaction with all significant stakeholders and for extending generous hospitality to the team.

**2.0. Progress towards achievement of SSA Goals:**

- 2.1. The state has made steady progress in achieving the goals of universal access and enrollment. Out of 574,069 children who were out of school in February 2001, the State has enrolled 108,000 children in regular schools and 255,144 in EGS and AIE centers during the last two years. At the beginning of the academic year 2004-2005, the State estimates that 210,925 children are yet to be enrolled. Add to this 68,533 children who have dropped out of the school system, the total number of out-of-school children in the state is 279,458. Of these, approximately 42,000 are working children. Most of these working children are in six districts: Thiruvannamalai (5,325), Chennai (4,795), Virudhunagar (4,608), Dharmapuri(3,790), Salem (3,458), and Kancheepuram (3,225).

Since, nearly two-thirds of working children are in these districts greater thrust is required in these districts.

- 2.2. Access to schools is nearly universal. With the establishment of 356 new primary schools and 249 EGS Centres during the last two years all habitations in the State have primary schooling facility and 98.8 percent have upper primary schools.
- 2.3. The pupil-teacher ratios have declined and are currently 39 at primary and 42 at upper primary level. There are, however, six districts including Salem with a PTR of 61 at upper primary level which may require state's attention and action to position adequate number of teachers.
- 2.4. The completion rates both for primary as well as upper primary level have improved significantly. 69 percent children as against 57 at the beginning of the program are completing primary schooling. The repetition and drop out rates have declined. While 27 percent children were repeating their grades in primary schools, two years ago, only 23 percent are repeating today. The percentage of repeaters at upper primary level which was 23 in 2001, has dropped down to 16 in 2003. The dropout rates have also declined to 8 percent at primary and 12 percent at upper primary level.
- 2.5. The system is moving towards provision of equitable learning opportunities. The gender and social gaps are narrowing. Today, more girls (68 percent) than boys (66 percent) are completing the cycle of primary schooling. However, the gender gap exists at upper primary level with 70 percent girls completing upper primary stage as compared to 74 percent boys. There are significant differences between social groups. As against 69 percent completion rate for the state as a whole, 66 percent Scheduled Caste (SC) children, and 61 percent Scheduled Tribes (ST) children are completing primary schooling. While net enrollment rates (NER) are 96 at primary and 94 at upper primary level, there is considerable variation within the state. There is no significant gender gap but net enrollment rate for SCs is 3 percentage points lower and for STs 8 percentage points lower than the state average. There are districts like Nagapattinam which have NER as low as 58 for ST girls.
- 2.6. While more children are completing primary schooling, the state must look more closely at districts like Dharmapuri and Nagapattinam where less than 60 percent are completing the cycle of primary schooling. Disadvantaged groups need closer focus in districts like Ramanathapuram where completion rate among ST children is only 12 percent.
- 2.7. The mission noted a number of positive developments that will help realize SSA goals in the state. The state has recognized the need to reform school governance to make it easier for first generation learners to enter and stay on in school. The state government's initiative to simplify procedures for admission to enable children, especially those who have been working or have attended bridge courses/alternative schools, to join at any time during the year will significantly enhance school enrollment and participation.
- 2.8. The State has also been able to network good non-governmental organizations and Civil Society partners into a synergistic relationship. This is likely to help accelerate the pace and quality of implementation.

- 2.9. Capacity building of various functionaries at cluster, block and districts level is being taken up systematically. Competent, highly motivated block level teams of resource persons recruited by the state are certainly going to play key role in sustaining the reform process bringing quality centre stage.
- 2.10. The involvement of the community, in the places visited by the Mission, was quite palpable and intense. The demand for good quality education was evident in all the habitations. There was also a willingness to contribute to the development of the school, by supplementing state funding, to position additional teachers and provide extra space and amenities. There was also a heightened awareness among parents about the value of educating their children. Most of them expressed their unambiguous resolve to let their children continue in school. The state has now an onerous task of speedily responding to this parental and community demand. The Mission was told that the next years annual work plan will take these ground realities into consideration. It was heartening to note that the district and block level functionaries showed great empathy, understanding and eagerness to create learning opportunities to all children, especially those living in remote areas. They demonstrated keen sensitivity to the differential learning needs of various ethnic groups like the Narikurava Tribals and thottanaickers.
- 2.11. The state has been successful in establishing linkages with reputed resource institutions for technical support. For instance the Avinashilingam Jana Shikshan Samasthan, IHRDC and the Spastics Society of Tamil Nadu were lending excellent guidance to the state department in the implementation of vocational and IED programs, Sona Engineering College in Salem District had helped develop Computer aided teaching materials and Madurai Kamaraj University was actively working with the State department to develop a GIS for better planning.
- 2.12. The state has taken steps to institutionalize the teacher training process and build a linkage with DIETS and BRCs. There was considerable awareness about the need for recurrent training of all teachers. The teachers training card documented different training programs attended by each teacher. Training needs assessment was carried out and a calendar of programs was systematically drawn up. The attention must now turn to the content and training modalities with greater accent on offering a number of training options and evaluating the outcomes of training.
- 2.13. The Mission was impressed by the transformation of the Municipal schools in Chennai where primary schooling has become truly child-centred, activity-based and competency – oriented following the learning-ladder, joyful learning approach started by the Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh. The inspired leadership of the City Municipal Commissioner and his dedicated team was heartening. The learning from this experiment could enable the State to scale up this innovation.
- 2.14. The Mission was impressed by the integration of vocational education component in regular schools as well as in bridge course camps. In the places visited by the Mission, the response to this approach was very positive. The state may like to look at how the activities could be further enriched primarily from the point of view of enhancing learning as well as creating school-based, income-generating enterprises.
- 2.15. The Mission noted the holistic perspective taken by the state to address the learning needs of all children. The ECE program was dovetailed into the UEE effort by



strengthening existing ICDS program and using available vacant public buildings in Villages. The pace and quality of the program implementation in the state is good and it should be possible for the state to achieve the goals of SSA sooner than most other states. The Mission noted that the processes crucial for accelerated, sustained progression towards achievement of the Mission objectives are in place. Institutions are also rapidly getting established at various levels. There is a groundswell of enthusiasm, buoyant optimism and eager expectations in the community that is helping the program to evolve into a people – centred mission. Yet a lot of work needs to be done to align all components to the Mission objectives and devote greater attention to the quality of teaching-learning processes and materials as well as professional upgradation of teachers.

### **3.0. Ensuring access to elementary education for all children**

#### **Key findings**

- 3.1 According to figures provided by the SSA Office based on census, Village Education and School Attendance Registers, SSA norms in respect of school access have been achieved in 2003-4 for primary level, and in 2004-5 for upper-primary level. As a result, NER for all children has increased by 9% between 2001-02 and 2003-04, attaining 96%. Visits have confirmed that both Village Education and School Attendance Registers are generally well maintained, including details of out-of-school children and drop outs and therefore constitute an increasingly reliable prime data source for tracking and sustaining achievements with regard to access.
- 3.2 Capacity to monitor these GAR as well as increase robustness of data will be further enhanced as a result of the completion of the computerised District Information System on Education (DISE) which the State is developing in combination with a GIS-based school mapping system which has been piloted in one District during 2004 -05.
- 3.3 Field visits by the mission in Coimbatore and Salem Districts confirmed that sustaining full access will increasingly depend on upgrading primary schools into middle schools and EGS into full fledged primary education schools as well as on improving mobility, particularly in rural areas.
- 3.4 Feedback during visits also confirmed that the State's free bus pass and midday meals for school children continue to contribute in an important way in sustaining high access and enrolment rates.
- 3.5 The strategy of SSA to support and upgrade ECCE schemes into pre-primary schools proves a very effective pathway for enhancing and sustaining access to primary education, particularly in underserved areas and among traditionally less school-friendly communities. ECCE schemes evolving into pre-primary schools not only prepare children for schooling, they contribute to building pro-school values in communities, including for girls and children belonging to SC and ST.
- 3.6 EGS, residential camps and bridge courses are effective SSA strategies for reaching out-of-school children and communities.

## Good practice

### 3.7. Involvement of the VEC and PTA in tracking out of school children

## Issues and suggestions

- 3.8. The strategy of SSA is to accomplish and sustain access norms through building new schools and/or upgrading and expanding existing schools/schooling schemes. An alternative access-improvement strategy may be to promote access and frequency of public transport to schools which may fall outside the SSA access norms but still remain within reasonable distance. This option may be particularly relevant when considering upgrading primary schools in school catchment areas which are relatively thinly populated. Moreover, bussing children from socially isolated areas, contexts and primary schools to upper-primary schools which are more centrally located may promote continued education as well as contribute to social integration of children from more traditional and isolated communities.
- 3.9. Construction of additional classrooms does not always go hand in hand with commensurate and timely recruitment and appointment of additional teachers. It is suggested that SSA explore a planning, sanctioning and implementation framework which better integrates expansion of school capacity with appointment of additional teachers.
- 3.10. Upgrading ECCE-schemes into pre-primary schools currently does not include provision to improve infrastructure of pre-primary schools (often lodged in small, dark and not sufficiently ventilated rooms), nor improve working conditions and career prospects for the voluntary teacher. Given the magnitude of the planned up-grading (10,000), it is suggested that these aspects be looked into urgently.
- 3.11. There is potential to further increase impact and sustainability of EGS and residential camps. The current, uniform financing norm and mechanism should preferably be adapted to better take into account the heterogeneity of children in EGS and residential camps. For example, the financing norm may distinguish between OSC and drop-outs. Moreover, the success of the schemes relies very heavily on highly committed voluntary workers who are generally poorly compensated for the work they perform and to whom no prospects are offered to continue to make available their invaluable expertise. It is suggested that SSA develops as soon as possible a strategy which will ensure more adequate compensation as well as opportunities to voluntary workers involved in EGS and residential camps.
- 3.12. Sustainability of mainstreaming children who participated in residential camps often remains highly precarious due to the poverty or problematic social context to which the children return. Close monitoring and continued mentoring of the child under SSA as well as mediation to link the child with other social support schemes from the Government and NGO's should be explored.
- 3.13. Provision of land by the community is a fundamental condition in SSA for the establishment of new schools as well as for the construction of new classrooms. Unlike in rural areas where land for school building and school expansion may be more readily available, land in urban areas may not be available, or may be available at such a high cost that it prevents or seriously constrains school building activities.

Conditions under SSA in respect of land availability for school and classroom building projects in urban areas may therefore need to be reviewed and adapted accordingly.

#### **4.0. Promoting equity**

##### **Key findings**

- 4.1. SSA promotes girls education in Tamilnadu essentially in 2 ways: (i) through Model Cluster Schools for girls in 13 blocks in 9 districts which have been identified as having lower than average enrolment of girls; (ii) through promoting vocational skills development activities for girl children, particularly at the upper primary level. The latter is mainly implemented through in-service teacher training in combination with design of training materials and provision of resources for procurement of inputs.
- 4.2. The mission has been impressed with the strategic approach, awareness and commitment in the State towards promoting inclusive education as well as progress achieved. Important elements in the approach are: involvement of existing schools, VEC and communities in tracking children with disabilities, partnership approach with 40 NGOs contracted to appoint 2 special teachers (in addition to a physiotherapist) at each Block Resource Centre; professional guidance, materials and back-up support from two internationally reputed resource institutions; supply to each BRC of special TLM as well as basic diagnostic/therapeutic equipment; training of all regular teachers on how to handle differently-abled ("difabled") children, awareness raising activities for parents, VEC etc.

##### **Good Practice**

- 4.3. **Public- Private Partnership** between upper-primary schools, EGS, residential camps and industrial / business houses. Such partnerships are able to promote exposure of children to real trades and acquisition of a diversity of skills with real market and employment potential.
- 4.4. The mission has been impressed with the state's strategy and plan to promote inclusive education including the innovative partnerships which it has developed with NGOs to implement the strategy. The mission suggests that this may be used and referred to as a good practice so that it may inspire the development of inclusive education plans and activities in other States.

##### **Issues and suggestions**

- 4.5. Impact of vocational skills development activities remains limited due to a lack of clear vision and strategy. By focusing on traditional areas such as sewing, knitting, food preservation, toy making, household decoration and handicrafts, these activities also tend to reinforce traditional role models of girls in society. Enhancing impact of vocational training activities at elementary school level would probably benefit from a more strategic SSA framework for vocational training, preferably aimed at girls and boys. Exposure of children to market-based vocational activities and partnerships between schools and industrial / business may be explored in this context.
- 4.6. The current, all-inclusive remuneration system of giving special IED teachers Rs. 4500/month does not seem to be adequate since a large portion of the remuneration is used by

the teachers to pay for public transport and other mobility related costs in connection with home visits and other outreach activities.

## **5.0. Enhancing quality of education**

### **Key findings**

- 5.1. Teacher/pupil ratios in the State are rapidly approaching SSA norms as a result of considerable recruitment of new teachers. However, the scope for improving transition and completion rates, and, more generally, learning outcomes remains high. There is a general awareness that this will require sustained efforts and investments in developing more child-friendly classroom transaction processes. The mission was able to observe that notwithstanding important efforts and investments by SSA in in-service training of teachers and development of more child-friendly teaching-learning materials, rote learning continues to be the prevailing mode of teaching in many schools. Improving quality of education has therefore become and is likely to remain the principal challenge of SSA in Tamilnadu during the coming years.
- 5.2. A particularly important challenge in this context will be the development of more child-friendly teaching-learning processes and materials for children with learning difficulties as well as for teaching-learning processes targetting heterogeneous groups.
- 5.3. The system of providing remedial classes to slow/difficult learners has become widespread but the scope for increasing the effectiveness of these classes and supporting materials remains high.
- 5.4. The mission was able to observe a number of initiatives aimed at developing innovative TLM, including the use of ICT. There are plans to utilise EDUSAT as well for teacher training and capacity building of block level functionaries.
- 5.5. The lack of classroom furniture, particularly in Grade V-VIII has become increasingly apparent as classroom environments attain minimum standards.

### **Good practice**

- 5.6. The state's decision to recruit and position competent Block Resource Teacher Educators is likely to catalyze quality consciousness and sustained progression towards improvement in learning processes and outcomes..

### **Issues and suggestions**

- 5.7. School budget and funding frameworks may in future be broadened to include provision for procurement of classroom furniture (see also point 7.2 below).
- 5.8. VEC have demonstrated a surprisingly entrepreneurial and cost-conscious attitude towards the development of school infrastructure, which SSA may build upon in an attempt to promote progressive furnishing and further improving classrooms. Some school and classroom improvement initiatives by VEC and PTA confirm that there probably exists a significant untapped capacity and creativity at local level for promoting relatively simple, low cost improvements to schools and classrooms, which SSA may help to unleash.

- 5.9. The mission is convinced that there is significant potential to further increase the scope and impact of efforts aimed at developing more effective and child-friendly TLM including the use of ICT. This may require promoting more strategic approaches and plans, monitoring and research of learning outcomes, as well as networking with professional institutions and partners, including in the private sector.
- 5.10. The mission recommends exploring the scope for further improving impact and effectiveness of in-service training and research activities under SSA through introduction of a peer review mechanism in combination with more systematic monitoring and in-depth evaluation of impact on learning outcomes.
- 5.11. The scope for innovation under the innovative grant component has been constrained by lack of flexibility. It is suggested that implementation guidelines for these grants may be interpreted more flexibly.

## **6.0. Governance**

### **6.1. Procurement:**

- 6.1.1. The mission was informed that the State has obtained approval for implementation of the 'Manual on the Financial Management and Procurement' (Manual) from Executive Committee of the SSA and have already advised all the District Project Coordinators (DPC) for implementation of the Manual. The state may like to take steps to train key functionaries to effectively implement the provisions of the Manual.
- 6.1.2. The mission was provided with a copy of the procurement plan for 2004-05. However the procurement plan did not contain many details. The state may incorporate important elements like the quantity of particular works/goods to be procured in a month and time-frame for completion for better monitoring. The procurement plan for 2005-06 is under preparation and is expected to be finalized by March 31, 2005.
- 6.1.3. The DPC office at Salem had prepared procurement plan for procurement to be handled by them during 2004-05. The mission was informed that the procurement plan for 2005-06 for the district will be finalized by end of February, 2005. Such plans need to be prepared for procurement activity in other districts as well.
- 6.1.4. The mission conducted post review of the following 5 contracts
- a) Purchase of play materials for Nursery Anganwari Centres, procured by District Project Office, Coimbatore; Contract number RC 6231/A2/2003 at a contract price of Rs. 298,000.
  - b) Construction of BRC at PN Palayam, Coimbatore District (by PWD); Contract number 301/04-05 at a contract price of Rs.486,000.
  - c) Construction of BRC building in Government Higher Secondary School (Boys) at Vanavasi in Nangavathi Block in Salem District (by PWD); Contract number 294/04-05 at a contract price of Rs.479,679.

- d) Construction of BRC building in Government Higher Secondary School at Magudanchavadi block in Salem district (by PWD); Contract number 292/04-05 at a contract price of Rs.478,605.
- e) Printing of Training modules (by DPC, Salem); Contract number 2C10/Trg/04 at a contract price of Rs.324,605.

- 6.1.5. The mission was informed that the State has not carried out any central procurement, in the State under the SSA so far. Buildings upto 3 classrooms, and CRC are constructed by VEC with community participation and that the BRC buildings are constructed by PWD by issuing contracts. On the whole, the Mission found that the prescribed procedures were being followed and the quality of civil works was good.
- 6.1.6. The discussion of the mission with members of VECs at various schools visited by the mission indicated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the VEC members and the Head Master.
- 6.1.7. The VEC members at all the schools informed the mission that the engineer from the State visits the construction on pre-decided stages and gives clearance to proceed further. The VEC also maintains photographs of completion of various stages. The VEC also maintains accounts of the expenditure done and the amount received from the State. The headmaster maintains the records and books of accounts.
- 6.1.8. Some of the VECs have contributed in cash for completion of the works, some by providing labor for construction. One of the VEC saved some amount from the available funds by close monitoring and economic and efficient procurement. The flow of funds to VECs seemed to be fairly smooth.
- 6.1.9. VECs informed the mission that for procurement of materials, some of the VEC members and Headmaster usually go to the market and inquire the rates from different shops, usually more than three, though no written quotation is obtained. For procurement of TLE, however, written quotation were obtained in one of the case reviewed by the mission at Annanagar in Salem District. They then take decision after taking into consideration the quality and ISI marking on the materials. VEC clarified to the mission that as VEC is also contributing the amount from their side, they ensure procurement of materials at the most economic rates.

## **6.2. Financial Management and Budgetary Control Devices**

- 6.2.1. Instructions have been issued to all District Program Co-ordinators (DPCs) to follow the provisions on "Accounting" exist in the "Manual on Financial Management and Procurement". DPCs have been advised that the proposed system will have the nomenclature of "Budget line" instead of "heads" to differentiate it from the Governmental system of major and minor heads.
- 6.2.2. Regarding the fund flow, the mission was informed that there are no major delays in the release of funds from the state to the district level, though there was some delay in receipt of funds from GOI during the current year.

- 6.2.3. The state has devised a format to obtain particulars on the releases and expenditure at district level to monitor that the funds are not lying unutilized. The monthly expenditure statement in the prescribed format is obtained from all districts before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding month. Based on a consolidated statement, monthly expenditure particulars are furnished to Govt. of India through Monthly Monitoring Report of Key Indicators (MMRKI).
- 6.2.4. The expenditure heads as described in the manual are being used. Based on the activity, expenditure heads called "Budget Lines" have been designed with specific codes. The mission was informed that all districts are adhering to the system.
- 6.2.5. The bank reconciliation is done in the Head quarters regularly. District reconciliation is also done in district level.
- 6.2.6. There is no delay in transfer of funds from SPO to districts. However, charging of commission on outstation cheques within the districts is an issue which the state is looking into to reduce the cost of transfer of funds.
- 6.2.7. The mission was informed that standard TOR as per the manual is being used for the selection of the auditor. The selection of auditor for 2004-05 will be completed by February 28, 2005.
- 6.2.8. The mission was informed that manual has been issued and that the manual is comprehensive and useful. However a simplified shorter version should be prepared to ensure that it is understood by all levels.
- 6.2.9. The Finance Accounts and Audit Wing of the districts is under the charge of one upgraded Superintendent. Considering the inadequacy of this staffing arrangement. The Accounts wings of the districts by appointing one Chartered Accountant to look after the Finance and Accounts Wing in addition to the upgraded Superintendent. Selection and appointment will be made before March 31, 2005.
- 6.2.10. One day workshop on accounting and maintenance of Books, Records and Registers was conducted for all ADPCs, Superintendent and staff incharge of Accounts at districts and head quarter.

#### Good practice

- 6.2.11. Some of the VECs have saved some amounts by economic procurement and by contributing labor for execution of works. These savings have been used for enlarging school spaces which will benefit the children.

#### Issues and Suggestions

- 6.2.12. The procurement plan should indicate the time of start and completion of actions for procurement of particular works / goods for better monitoring and to initiate timely corrective steps.

- 6.2.13. The state should ensure that the provisions of the manual are widely disseminated.
- 6.2.14. Negotiations were held, with the lowest bidder, in 4 out of 5 contracts which were post reviewed by the Mission. Negotiations with the bidders should normally be held in exceptional circumstances and not as a routine. Further, adequate time should be given to bidders to submit their bids after advertisement is issued for procurement of goods / works which was not given in the contracts post reviewed..

## **7.0. Conclusion : Reflections on the SSA framework in Tamilnadu:**

### **7.1. Shaping elementary education policy in respect of access, equity and quality**

The mission has confirmed that the SSA norm-based policy and financing framework has been very effective in directing policy priorities and activities in the state and in achieving progress in the State in respect of SSA norms on access and equity. Norms regarding quality of education provision are proving more difficult to achieve. This may require further strengthening of the SSA policy and funding framework with regard to learning outcomes. Developing more appropriate performance indicators and measurement of learning outcomes would be desirable.

### **7.2. Ensuring and sustaining adequate budget allocation to elementary education in the medium term**

Reaching SSA norms has undoubtedly benefited from norm-based funding of schools and education schemes. Sustaining full access and equity norms and continuously improving the learning environment and outcomes may be better achieved in future by switching to an integrated, whole school budgeting and financing system which would further empower schools and communities. The mission suggests that the possibility for introducing whole-school budgeting in states such as Tamilnadu, where strategies are rapidly shifting to sustaining rather than achieving SSA norms, be explored and studied during 2005, in the run-up to the joint mid-term review mission in January 2006.

### **7.3. Capacity development and empowerment**

The mission has been very positively impressed with the empowerment which the highly devolved SSA policy and funding framework has been able to bring about at the village and community level, including in traditionally less school-friendly communities.

Furthermore, the SSA framework has equally been very effective in strengthening commitment and capacity towards supporting enhanced service delivery of elementary education within block and cluster level institutions as well as in building new and innovative partnerships with civil society organisations.



INDIA  
SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYA (SSA)  
FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION  
STATE REPORT: TRIPURA  
(Jan 26-Feb 3, 2005)

*1. Introduction*

1.1 The state team to Tripura was represented by two members, Dr. Jyotsna Jha and Ms. Dhanwanti Hardikar, both representing the Government of India. We are grateful to the Education Minister and the Chief Secretary for meeting and giving us hearing. We received full support and cooperation from the state and district teams including the Commissioner Education, State Project Director, SCERT and Tripura Board of Secondary Education, District officials and the representatives of different institutions during our visit and acknowledge the same. During our visits we benefited tremendously from our interactions held with students, teachers, headmasters, school inspectors, BRC and CRC resource persons, PRI, VEC and MTA representatives. We also express our thanks for the hospitality extended to us by one and all during our visits.

1.2 Tripura is one of the North-Eastern states comprising of only four districts. It was not covered by the DPEP and the SSA is the first programme of its kind being implemented in the state. However, it was earlier part of a kingdom and has a history of investing in education on a priority. But unlike other North Eastern states, the Christian Missionaries have not played a major role in spreading the education in Tripura. With an average literacy rate of 73.66 in 2001 (male: 81.47 and female: 65.41), the state is second only to Mizoram among the seven North Eastern states. The state has an agrarian economy with heavy dependence on the Union government for budgetary support. It is surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides making the transport and communication links with other parts of the country difficult. The SC community constitutes nearly 16 percent of the state's total population. Nearly 31 percent of the population is tribal; the tribal concentrated areas being covered under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, known as ADC (Autonomous District Council) area. About three-fourth of the primary schools are located in the ADC areas and are managed by the ADC governments. It has implications for educational administration and therefore, for SSA implementation. The report details this out at a later stage.

1.3 The pace of programme implementation has been high with almost all major activities showing satisfactory progress. The management structures and the systems are in place with a need for some strengthening in terms of personnel at state and district project offices. The linkages with different institutions such as PRIs and SCERT have been established and help in smooth implementation. The MIS is operational and being used for planning and monitoring purposes to some extent. The fund flow mechanisms are in place and work efficiently. However, the need as well as scope for significant improvement exists in a number of areas, and the same are being highlighted in the report. A high level of motivation at the education department level and openness at teachers' level is visible making it easier to realize and work on the gaps that exist.

Community awareness also appeared to be high in most parts we visited. The SSA has got a boost from the state initiative known as nine-point programme for improving the school environment. Education has become a priority is also obvious from the fact that the state government had set up an Education Commission, the first in the state, in 2001. The Commission submitted its report in 2003 and a number of recommendations have already been accepted and acted upon. A few other recommendations are also valid and their acceptance would help improve quality of teaching-learning in schools.

## 2. Access to Schooling Facilities

2.1 A significant number of primary (343) and upper primary schools (150) have been opened and a substantial number of existing primary schools (400) upgraded to upper primary level in the state with support of the SSA in all the four districts. As a result, the number of schools has increased substantially even from the figures provide in the 7<sup>th</sup> All India Education Survey for the year 2002 (Table 1). In addition, 1901 EGS centres (as against 1939 planned) and 152 (as against 200) Bridge Course Centres have been operationalised to provide access to over-age and drop out children. As a result, the access to schooling facilities has improved tremendously in the recent past.

Table 1: Number and Availability of Schools in Tripura

	1993	2002	2005
Number of Primary Schools	1942	1996	1776
Number of Upper Primary schools	400	406	1001
Number of EGS Centres operational			1901

Note: Almost all upper primary have primary sections.

Source: Sixth (1993) and Seventh (2002) All India Education Survey, NCERT. SSA Mission, Tripura for 2005 data.

2.2 In order to identify the out of school children, the state had conducted household survey in 2001 and nearly 94000 children were reported to be out of school. About 88000 are reported among them are reported to be enrolled bringing down the number to only about 6000 in 2004. With the opening of large number of schools and EGS centres on one hand and full scale campaigns through print media, radio and village level bodies on the other, the level of enrolment has definitely gone up significantly. However, the figure for out-of-school needs to be arrived at more carefully. The Cohort study undertaken show a high level of repetition for both primary and upper primary levels in 2002 (varying between 20 to 50 percent in different blocks). The Seventh All India Education Survey shows that the drop-out rates are very high (42 percent at primary and 61 percent at upper primary in 2002-03) in all four districts. This means that even if 88000 of the identified reported 93000 out-of-school children were enrolled, the figure for out of school children cannot remain limited only to 6000. A good number of children who were enrolled in school in 2001 could have dropped out and become out-of-school in subsequent years.

2.3 A perusal of the form for household survey also indicates some scope for improvement. Although the information regarding social group (SC, ST, etc.) are collected at the family level, the aggregation at the village and higher levels do not

provide disaggregated figures. This leads to adoption of uniform approaches and strategies to address the issue. For instance, though the problem of non-participation is believed to be more common in tribal areas, the state has developed only Bengali audio communication materials for awareness and broadcast them through All India Radio. Although print materials have also been apparently developed in Kakborak (the major tribal language), it is usually not as effective as radio in remote areas. The choices given for reasons for dropping out does not include failure in examinations (common as indicated by high repetition rates) and difficulty in understanding what is taught due to different tribal languages ( a common reason cited by all stakeholders in our interactions). This could lead to incorrect analysis and inferences leading to inappropriate strategies.

2.4 The availability of space appears to be adequate in the state. All the schools visited had sufficient number of rooms and space available for activities, play and other such requirements. The SSA has played a major role in this case as well, especially in providing pucca buildings or rooms. Although a number of schools had pucca buildings built with the help of Operation Blackboard, state funds or other centrally assisted projects in Rural Development, the majority had the traditional semi-pucca buildings following traditional bamboo based materials for wall partitions. All construction works proposed for 2003-04 have been completed and those for 2004-05 have been started. The quality of construction appeared to be good in all the places visited. Local material has been used in the shape of bamboo for inner ceilings and the rooms are well-lit. Majority of schools have water and sanitation facilities, and the state has a plan for universal coverage with support of several initiatives. About one-third schools are without any blackboard in the state (DISE). All schools have received annual school development and minor repair grants, and could use it also for putting up blackboards.

2.5 The design of the school as well as BRC building, especially the former, is unimaginative and can be improved to make it more suitable for children and active teaching-learning processes. All rooms are built in a row, with iron doors and windows taking most space of the narrow verandah. Children's blackboards on all three sides of the walls, a common practice now in many parts of the country, is not a part of the design. Although teachers' blackboards have been built in new classrooms constructed, no blackboard figures on the outer walls in verandah or different sides of training halls. There is also ample scope for more effective use of available rooms, constructed space and the grounds available in the schools. A number of old rooms that have been abandoned after new construction appear fit for use for different purposes. All primary schools serve hot midday meal, cooked in a separate shed situated a little away from the school building to ensure safety. However, this is mostly served in open with little concern for hygiene. The empty rooms could be used for serving meal or library or study rooms, group works for craft / work experience or for various other purposes such as establishing eco club, as observed in one of the upper primary schools that was visited. Playgrounds could be used for developing Courts (for playing badminton, Kho Kho, Kabaddi) and putting up simple, inexpensive play things such as sand pits, slides, swings, etc. Gardens could be developed with children's participation. The state's nine point programme also includes the aspects of plantations and hygiene.

2.6 The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) is quite favorable in the state at both primary (27:1) and upper primary schools (17:1). The primary schools visited in the two districts (about 20) had PTR varying between 6:1 and 20:1. Although a substantial number of schools in ADC areas are still single teacher schools, and the teachers' distribution is skewed in favour of non-tribal areas, the PTR does not seem to be higher than 40:1 even in those schools. The interactions with PRI representatives and ADC officials suggest that the incidence of teachers' absenteeism is high in the ADC areas. In one of our unscheduled visits to one primary school in an ADC area with a total enrolment of 42, only two out of eight teachers were present. The real issues, however, are linked use of teachers' time, the teachers' understanding and knowledge of local languages and their capacity to deal with subject teaching effectively. Despite a low PTR, the students do not appear to be getting the personal attention they need. These issues are being discussed at later stages.

### 3. *Schooling Participation, Equity and Equality of Opportunities*

3.1 It is difficult to analyse the participation indicators for the tribal and SC populations due to limitations of data. The DISE data shows that the SC students constitute about 16 percent of total enrolment at primary stage and 22 percent at upper primary stage, the figures being proportionate to their share in the population. The same data shows that the ST students constitute about 65 percent of total enrolment at primary stage and 47 percent at upper primary stage, the figures being much higher than their proportion of about 31 percent in the population. On the other hand, although the household or cohort data (to be completed by February end, some initial data shared with us) does not provide the disaggregated details, the general impression of all stakeholders in the state is that tribals are the largest constituents of the out-of-school children, drop-outs and repeaters. It is possible that a good section of children belonging to non SC/ST communities are going to private schools. However, this data is not being collected by the household and hence it remains only a conjecture. As mentioned earlier, the availability and presentation of disaggregated data for different social groups would make it easier to understand the problem and plan differentiated strategies for the same.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Ratios at Primary and Upper Primary Stages in Tripura (2002-03)

	Gross Enrolment Ratio		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary Stage			
Total	121.40	115.47	118.49
Rural	122.09	115.70	118.96
Upper Primary Stage			
Total	72.50	68.41	70.50
Rural	64.01	59.38	61.75

Source: Seventh (2002) All India Education Survey, NCERT.

3.2 Gender disparities are present in schooling participation but are not as sharp as in many other states. Girls constitute about 47 percent of total enrolment at primary stage and 45 percent at other stages, as against about 49 percent in population (DISE). In terms of enrolment ratios, there does not exist any disparity at primary level but a notable one, though lower than the national average, at upper primary level (Table 2). ST girls appear

to be the lowest participation as they constitute only 4 percent of primary enrolment and 41 percent of upper primary enrolment for STs (DISE). The state has provided computers for some girls' upper primary schools as a special initiative. The state also proposed to open four hostels (two for STs, one for SCs and one for Muslim girls) for girls in tribal areas and the construction has just started. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to know that about three fourth of the schools opened and upgraded under the SSA are located in ADC areas and is expected to benefit both tribal boys and girls, especially the latter as the distance to school usually prevents them from going to schools. However, certain more initiatives could be undertaken. One of those could be linking Anganwadi/balwadi with primary schools in terms of timing and location so that girls could be made free from the responsibility of sibling care. The state is planning to open a few ECE centres on an experimental basis under SSA but that would not be adequate. The NPEGEL and KGBV interventions have been sanctioned for two blocks but that did not fall in the districts visited. It is, however, worth mentioning that the state intends to introduce interventions similar to the NPEGEL in additional blocks through their own resources.

3.3 A number of initiatives have been started to identify and integrate children with various forms of disabilities. A survey was conducted through camps where tests were held to identify children with disabilities followed by exercises of establishing links with other institutions for providing them aids and appliances. Building ramps was not a part of the design initially and hence not found in all schools. However, ramps have been added in areas where disabled children were identified. The ramp is now being made a part of the design for future building.

3.4 Caste divides do not appear to be affecting the school environment negatively. This was also indicated by the fact that the cooks for midday meals were dalits in many primary schools and children coming from all communities readily accepted the food. The parents were aware of the fact and had no problem whatsoever.

3.5 The schooling opportunities can be called adequate only when children of all social and economic groups receive due attention and are dealt with sensitivity by teachers. In this respect, several concerns deserve greater attention. In one school, teachers' insistence on payment of sports fee in the same month when contribution was also being collected for a social occasion was forcing some poor children to remain absent from schools. When children coming from poor families remain absent on these grounds, the likelihood for dropping out increases. The teachers could be given some inputs through training and discussions on attitudinal issues covering aspects of economic, social and cultural marginalisation.

3.6 Another issue relates to language. In tribal habitations in ADC areas, usually all children within habitations have the same mother tongue. Although Kakborok is the major language there are many other languages like Riang, Malsum, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Chakma, Kuki, etc. The primary teachers in these areas are a mix of those who speak either Bengali or Kakorok. Kakborok teachers usually have lower than required qualification of High School. It was pointed out in our interactions that while Bengali speaking teachers find it difficult to interact with children, Kakborok teachers do not have

adequate subject knowledge and skills. In either case, children are not getting full opportunity to learn.

3.7 All books for Mathematics, Social Science and subjects other than language are available only in Bengali making it difficult for children. Children speaking languages which are significantly different from Kakborak are further deprived of opportunity to learn as no teacher understands their language. In a number of schools located outside ADC areas, significant numbers of tribal students are there. Teachers in these schools are also not trained or equipped to deal with this situation. A number of upper primary teachers also shared this as a major problem they face in their classes. The state has a system of providing readers in addition to textbooks from class IV but again these are available only in Bengali. The readers could be developed for tribal students in local languages using their own tales and history. The curricular framework (given to us) provides for the teaching of two languages, Bengali and Kakborok, in all primary schools but this is not in practice. The training module does not provide separate guidance for teachers of Kakborok speaking children. An exposure to the experiences of some of the states, notably Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, in developing specific strategies including bilingual materials could help in this regard.

#### 4. *Quality of Teaching- Learning*

4.1 School environment is one of the first factors that impacts learning. The school environment, especially for beginners, should provide enough exposure to the written words through a variety of materials and attractive, pictorial display of concepts and information. Although a number of charts and maps are seen in the headmasters' and staff rooms but not in classrooms and other parts of the school building easily accessible to children.

4.2 The classroom transactions that we observed in almost all the schools, at both primary and upper primary stages, suggest the need for a significant improvement in almost all aspects. Many classrooms lacked most basic requirements such as blackboards, and even when they were there they were not being put to much use in most cases. Some of the teachers interacted with and opined that blackboard had no relevance in teaching subjects such as language or social sciences. The entire teaching learning process in most places seems to be limited to reading aloud both on the part of teachers and students, and copying from the book on the part of students. The classes are too silent with near absence of a dialogue between teachers and students. Language is a major issue affecting classroom transaction and the quality of learning. It has been dealt with in the previous section in detail.

4.3 Introduction of English from class I is one of the initiatives undertaken this year which has been welcomed in all quarters. However, certain aspects of its implementation need to be reviewed, such as exclusive focus on reading and writing even before oracy is established, or heavy reliance on direct and literal translations right from class I. The new English textbooks use some recent materials and themes but offer less exposure to language and fewer language activities. The training module talks of four skills of

language and an eclectic approach but unless these ideas are supported in the form of a concrete programme through the textbook they will not become a reality in the classroom.

4.4 The academic session starts in January in the state. The textbooks, which are now being developed, printed and distributed through the TBSE, have reached schools in the last week of January. However, some titles are yet awaited. The delay in distribution of books seems to be affecting teaching-learning as little teaching takes place in absence of books. The binding of some of the new books is poor and the pages fall apart quite easily. A quick perusal of some of the old and new books suggests that the content of the new books has been updated which is a welcome change. However, since the books are being introduced newly, the amount and quality of the content need to be screened carefully. A planned feedback and evaluation for their effectiveness and relevance would help in ensuring their utility. A rigorous pre-publication reviews and trailing of textbooks should be ensured in future.

4.5 Teachers have received teachers' grants in time. The money remains concentrated in the hands of the headmaster who takes requisitions from teachers and buys the materials. All schools have spent some parts of the grants in buying charts, maps and geometry sets with little variety or innovation. Materials are bought without much thought for their relevance to the curriculum or the age-group of the children. The amount received by most schools is large because of the low PTR and high number of teachers, and in most cases they seem to be in need of more ideas for meaningful use of this resource. Some carefully selected reference books for teachers and children's books for students were available (supplied by the state government a few years ago) in certain schools but these were kept locked and had not been made use of in most cases.

4.6 Under SSA, the state has started a process of 10 day teacher training for all their primary and upper primary teachers. The state collaborated with a Kolkata based organization for training of master trainers who in turn have been training teachers at BRCs. The numbers covered so far appear to be a little behind schedule. There was universal appreciation on the part of the teachers towards the training. They seemed enthused by the experience and appear to have got the message that classroom processes need to be made attractive. This message is yet to be reflected in the transaction processes.

4.7 Although the SCERT has developed two separate modules for primary and upper-primary teachers, the training received appears to be the same for both. It would help to have specific training programmes in future as the needs vary significantly. Specific inputs on subject teaching are critical at upper primary level and to some extent even at primary level. Also important is to have closer links between the training, school curriculum and actual classroom teaching. Currently, there is a disconnect between the study areas identified in the curricular framework and those in the training module developed by the SCERT. For instance, the training module identifies Art Education as a separate area of study whereas the curricular framework provides for it only under

cultural functions in work education. In the light of the above discussions, it is also important for capacity building of teachers to focus on the following areas:

- Effective use of blackboards. The blackboard is the most inexpensive, flexible and live teaching aids allowing teachers to illustrate any teaching point to the entire classroom at a time.
- Meaningful use of instructional materials such as textbooks. Children need to be initiated into the use of the textbooks for study purposes by teachers through actual experience in the classroom. If the textbook or any other instructional material is not shared well in a one-to-many situation, children fail to make good use of it in or outside the classroom.
- Variety in teaching strategies. Monotonous and stereotype teaching can be a deterrent to learning especially for young learners. Classrooms need to be interactive, alive and engaging where students acquire rather than passively receive skills or knowledge. A variety of individual, small-group and large-group activities requiring oral and written work, as well as experimentation helps in this.
- Choosing or developing relevant teaching learning aids. A teaching aid is meant to be a specific device to facilitate learning in a particular situation, and not an end in itself. The specific needs and interests of children with whom the aids are to be used must be taken into account. Inexpensive materials can be turned into excellent aids and a number of effective activities can be conducted without material aids.
- Encouraging creativity, innovation and a spirit of enquiry among the students. Children's involvement and participation in the classroom processes is most crucial for effective learning. Creating classroom experiences that give them opportunities to explore, think and apply on their own would ensure that their learning becomes a continuous process.

4.8 It is also necessary to sustain the inputs given in the course of training with regular inputs and follow-ups. Presently, the BRC and CRC resource persons undertake a few school visits but do not have any planned academic support programme. The visits are mainly used for collection of data and other information. An easy access to local level bulletins and magazines, or availability of specific, handy materials for teachers to help them in their daily teaching would also help in acting as continuous support. The SSA is planning headmasters' orientation which could help in this regard.

4.9 Quality of education has been a concern addressed by the Education Commission. Some of the quality related recommendations need to be implemented with greater rigour and urgency. For instance, the state government has accepted the Commission's recommendation of increasing the teaching time at primary stage to at least four hours but this is not being practiced for classes I and II. The state has been following a practice of having only 2 hours 15 minutes of teaching time for years and the same is in practice even now. This restricts their learning opportunities severely especially for children who are deprived of an educational environment at home. This needs immediate action. The Commission also recommended subject-wise tutorial classes for groups not exceeding 10 children for individual attention. It is possible to implement this if full use is made of



teachers' time spent in school. The low PTR existing in most schools makes it easier to achieve.

4.10 The state has adopted 'continuous and comprehensive' evaluation (in the shape of four written tests held in a year) along with two half yearly tests and 10 percent marks are reserved for oral tests. Interactions with teachers, CRPs and BRPs, however, indicate that the actual process of evaluation now emphasizes written objective tests. Continuous evaluation is actually an integral part of teaching and in order to be comprehensive it has to comprise of all aspects of skill and knowledge. It would help to provide a proper orientation on these issues illustrating sound practices of evaluations to the teachers.

4.11 Interactions with students attending single-teacher EGS centres and their parents indicated their happiness at the access to education made possible. The EGS teachers themselves showed motivation, commitment and some flair for innovation. However, the workload of the EGS teachers is in fact more than that of a regular school teacher in terms of the number of students, subjects and classes handled simultaneously. Drop out students have been enrolled in different classes from I to VIII based on their levels of proficiency. The instructional materials provided to them are minimal and lack visual appeal. Their training is perfunctory. They receive only 2-3 day initial training with no well-planned follow up activities through the year. These problems can in future challenge the sustainability of the entire scheme. It is necessary to lend more and better academic support and financial support to the EGS centre / teacher. It has not been possible for us to visit a functioning Bridge Course centre but the general approach appears to be the same as EGS.

## 5. *Structures and Processes for Management and Monitoring*

5.1 Both the state and district SSA offices are fully staffed as against the approved structure. Given the challenges the state has in terms of quality improvement, creating a position for quality coordinator at state and district levels could help. They also appeared to be fully aware of the SSA objectives and approaches as well as administrative and financial processes. The level of motivation is high and they seem to have taken the programme with all seriousness. The Deputy Directors and the Inspectors of Schools, who are in-charge at respective levels are devoting substantial time and energy to the implementation of the SSA. Given the high level of motivation and involvement, an exposure to and sharing of relevant experiences with some DPEP states would help them diversify and strengthen their strategies. The PRI institutions are active in the state and the SSA has established active linkages with them. They are part of the respective decision-making committees at all levels from district to block to villages. The chairpersons of the Panchayat Samitis at block levels are aware of all components and initiatives, and see this as an opportunity to enhance their schooling facilities and improve their education. The VEC members including the chairpersons (Pradhan of the Gram Panchayat) and the MTA members seemed well aware and informed about all programme details.

5.2 The state has released its share of money to the SSA Mission. The systems for financial management are in place, and the flow of funds has been timely. The entire transfer of funds from the state to the Mother Teacher Association (MTA) through the District Level Education Committee (DLEC), Block Level Education Committee (BLEC) and the Village Education Committee (VEC) is through bank transfers. Tripura Grameen Bank handles their entire transfer of funds without charging any fee. All blocks, villages and schools visited provided the details of the amounts received and spent to the mission on their own. The registers of the meetings where the decisions are taken are all available. All schools, VEC offices, CRCs, BRCs, panchayat samitis, block education and district offices display the details of funds received and spent in detail. The awareness regarding the manual on financial management and procurement exists and the processes suggested therein are followed. There appeared to be an ease with the processes and no issue related to the financial process or procurement was raised.

5.3 Both state and district levels raised the issue of facing a lack of funds due to non-release of second installment from the GOI. Apparently, the construction works that have been started are suffering due to this, especially because of the construction season being short in the state. The districts shared experiences of facing problems in undertaking certain construction activities due to low prescribed unit cost. For instance, the prescribed unit cost of Rs.15000.00 per water source in school was reported to be very low as compared to their requirement for nearly Rs.35000.00 for the purpose. Their understanding of the norm is that the prescribed unit costs cannot be increased in any circumstance. They also find dovetailing for each separate work (for instance, generating Rs.15000.00 from the SSA and the remaining from, say, a Rural Development scheme) difficult because of different accounting procedures being followed. This is just one of the examples shared with us to illustrate the issue. The GOI and the state could go into the details of the issue to facilitate more contextual planning and smooth implementation.

5.4 The school related construction activities were undertaken by the VECs during 2003-04. However, all the VECs and the MTAs passed resolutions in the year 2004-05 to the effect that the Rural Development department should undertake construction activities even at school level. Two reasons have apparently prompted this change. One is that the transportation costs are very high due to hilly terrain and the state being surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides. Centralised procurement helps them buy materials at cheaper costs. The other reason is the construction process being slow when it was being undertaken by the VECs due to paucity of technical skills and slow supervision. The new system works well but we have urged them to consider construction being undertaken by the VECs and the supervision by the Rural Development department.

5.5 The state has about 1200 teacher vacancies but given the low PTR that is not a major concern. The recruitment is based on marks obtained and the interviews held with a special consideration for the socio-economic background. A number of teachers recruited in tribal areas do not have minimum qualification which the state is trying to ameliorate. The state has also initiated the process of redeploying teachers to higher PTR areas on the basis of certain criteria. They have also started the process of computerizing the teachers' service records. Development of a comprehensive, criteria based transfer

policy using computerized service records would bring transparency in redeployment process in the long run.

5.6 Since pre-service teacher training has not been a requirement for recruitment in the state, majority of teachers are untrained. The state has started two initiatives to train all its existing teachers to be able to fulfill the NCTE norms. One, a six-month training programme is being conducted at the DIETs in two shifts, and two, a six month training programme has been designed with IGNOU for training through distance mode. The SSA is supporting the latter. It was not possible for us to go into the content of the programme but it is hoped that they cater to the specific needs of the state, as identified in the report at various places. Only the two districts have DIETs and the other two are now being established. The existing DIETs are poorly staffed with large number of vacancies, the training load being managed by temporarily hired personnel. Since the SSA visualizes the implementation of quality related interventions through these institutions, the strengthening in terms of staffing as well as their orientation becomes crucial. With the shift of the responsibility of developing, printing and distributing textbooks for classes I to VIII to the TBSE, the SCERT now does not have a major role in this area. They could now play a more vital role in supporting DIETs, BRCs and CRCs in establishing an effective institutional chain for teacher training and academic support. The state has a functional IASE which plays a role in upper primary teacher training (since majority of upper primary schools are part of the secondary schools) along with secondary and senior secondary.

5.7 The block offices are well provided for in terms of infrastructure and staff. However, the monitoring of schools under ADC management is a concern. Although they have an inspectorate, the monitoring was reported to be weak for a variety of reasons. Closer links between the inspectorates of the education department and the ADC could be established for facilitating improved monitoring.

5.8 All BRCs (40) and CRCs (214) have been operationalised in all blocks and the buildings completed in majority of them. The headmaster of the secondary/senior basic (upper primary) school where the BRC / CRC is located acts the coordinator. In addition, three Resource Persons have been provided at both BRC and CRC levels either by positioning teachers on deputation or by hiring retired teachers/headmasters. The essential qualifications for the resource person is graduate and B.Ed. As a result, only secondary teachers qualify for the position. This is a major constraint as teaching experience at primary level does not find a place. The state is hiring only retired teachers on a full time basis and many stakeholders expressed their reservation regarding their openness to new ideas, and efficacy in handling school visits. It would be a better idea to identify the skills and knowledge that the resource persons at different levels require and hire them through a suitable selection process in which fresh individuals as well as serving teachers in schools could also participate.

5.9 While the BRCs are primarily functioning as training institutions, the CRCs have so far been functioning mainly as an administrative unit for transfer of information to lower and upper levels. The resource persons in the CRCs spend about 80 percent of time

in collecting and compiling information. The meetings of headmasters are organized once in one to two months at CRCs and the discussions there again pertain mainly to the information about various schemes and initiatives. Although it would always be essential to spend some time on these aspects, the proportion could be reduced and the focus on regular academic support increased. The CRCs should be seen as an institution that allows teachers time, space, environment and opportunity for peer learning. It is also visualized as an institution for close academic monitoring. However, the fact that the number of schools and teachers covered by one CRC is large (20 to 25 schools; 100 to 300 teachers) also makes it difficult to operationalise this concept. Since the state practices subject teaching even at primary level, it could think of organizing subject/class wise meetings at CRC on certain occasions.

## 6. *Recommendations*

1. Developing appropriate strategies for facilitating teaching-learning in tribal languages including teacher training and development of need based materials. This should be based on an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic aspects of tribal children.
2. Developing a coordinated approach for the teaching learning based on newer approaches being adopted elsewhere and drawing upon an in-depth analysis of their own existing curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, other materials and classroom processes.
3. Invigorating teacher development strategies and processes taking note of the observations made in the report.
4. Disaggregated data and information from varied sources being used to facilitate differentiated strategies.
5. Development of a clear, long term strategy for sustaining and integrating EGS centres.
6. Reorganisation of CRCs so that each has a manageable number of teachers (not exceeding 80).
7. Increasing the daily teaching time for classes I and II to at least four hours.
8. Developing a strategy to use the low PTR and the consequent unutilised teacher's time for providing individual attention and effective tutoring. The strategy could be designed in a manner that it helps all students, taking the specific needs of children speaking different languages and coming from different socio-economic backgrounds into account.
9. GOI to provide support to the state for the following:
  - Technical resource for the first two recommendation to be carried out by the state.
  - Technical support for developing teacher development strategies and processes, and for conceptualizing BRC and CRCs for the same.
  - Providing more opportunities for cross-state sharing of experiences through regional/national workshops
  - Guidance and support in civil works designs

**INDIA**  
**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN**  
**FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION**  
**UTTAR PRADESH**  
**January/February 2005**

**1. Introduction**

A JRM team comprised of Rukmini Banerji, Rajeev Kapoor, and Robert Prouty visited 12 blocks in 3 districts of Uttar Pradesh from January 27-February 3, 2005. The purpose of the visit was to evaluate implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program. The team would like to thank the State Project Director and his team, as well as the students, parents, teachers, administrators and others encountered over the course of the visit for the warmth of their welcome and for their contributions to the achievement of the mission objectives.

The education sector in Uttar Pradesh has achieved much over the past year or so, from the recruitment of 1 lac teachers, to the successful implementation of the midday meal scheme, to the creation of 14 new DIETs and the construction of an unprecedented number of new schools and classrooms (17,000 new schools and 10,000 additional classrooms in the year). Government expenditures for SSA have increased by approximately Rs 500 crores compared to one year ago, and the flow of funds has been greatly expedited. A range of activities undertaken through schemes in support of marginalized groups such as SC/ST children, girls, and children with disability have been successfully implemented. These achievements, many of them made possible through convergence with other sectors, have contributed directly to increased enrollments and a remarkable decline in pupil/teacher ratios state-wide. Uttar Pradesh is now well-positioned to build on this momentum to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and to improve overall planning and monitoring system-wide.

The following report is presented in four sections, reviewing issues related to improving access, equity, quality, and governance respectively. For each issue, a broad statement of progress is followed by a discussion of issues and recommendations. Annexure 1 provides an in-depth review of finance and procurement.

**2. Access**

**Development Objective 1:** To reduce the number of out of school children with an increase in enrollment.

**Progress:** Major steps have been taken by the state government in the last 2 years in terms of increasing access. This has been done primarily through building new schools, additional classrooms and by spreading the net of EGS and AIE/AS centers throughout

the state.<sup>1</sup> In particular, over the last three years, approximately 17000 new schools and 10,000 additional classrooms have been built. (Of these, close to 3000 primary schools and about 3000 upper primary schools have been constructed in 2004-2005 alone). The availability of new schools and classrooms in such large numbers is bound to have a positive impact on access to schooling.

The available numbers indicate that there has been significant progress in terms of enrollment of children in the education system and reduction in numbers of out-of-school children. The opening of new primary schools and the addition of new classrooms has also played an important role in improving access. The revision of unit costs of construction by the state government for primary and upper primary school buildings has also enabled civil works to move ahead as planned.

24.56 lac children were identified as being out of school through household survey done in May-June 2004. After enrollment drives in July-September 2004 to enroll children in school as well as in EGS and AIE/AS centres, the number of out-of-school children are reported to have declined to 1.51 lacs. The opening of new primary schools and the addition of new classrooms have also played an important role in improving access. The revision of unit costs of construction by the state government for primary and upper primary school buildings has also enabled civil works to move ahead as planned.

**Issues and recommendations:** Looking ahead, in order to strengthen planning and implementation, the following issues need to be kept in mind:

On data collection:

- A closer analysis of data on out of school children and enrollment is needed at all levels, especially at NPRC, block and district levels.
- Data on children not yet enrolled and due to enter Std 1 in July should be reported separately from the numbers of out-of-school children age 7 and above who are "out of school" either because they had enrolled earlier or had dropped out.
- Greater involvement of all VEC members, community people especially women in need assessment and in planning for out-of-school children and for new schools in villages.

On EGS and AIE/AS:

- In each block, there are children from particular types of backgrounds who are commonly found to be out of school: For example in the two districts where field visits were conducted, the two common types were: first, children of families who work in brick kilns and children in hotels and restaurants in block and district towns. Providing AIE/AS centers for every such location will help to bring these children into the "education net". District specific target groups of children need to be identified and targeted.

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<sup>1</sup> Although midday meals are a state government initiative and not a SSA program element, midday meals are also likely to play a important role in improving both enrollment and attendance in primary schools.

- For “durable mainstreaming” of children especially older children from AIE/AS/Bridge courses, there are several key areas that need to be strengthened. First, developing “accelerated learning” techniques to help such children to “catch up” is needed to build strong academic preparation for successful entry into formal schools. Second, keeping in mind local context and conditions, the integration of such groups of AIE/AS/EGS children into regular schools has to be planned in advance. Third, recently mainstreamed children need continued support to ensure daily attendance in school and guaranteed support for continued learning. Without extra help they are at risk for dropping out.
- AIE/AS could demonstrate greater flexibility and context-specific variety in reaching unreached children. For example, if small groups of out-of-school children are scattered through out the gaon sabha, the AIE/AS should have the flexibility of a mobile teacher. Examples from other states could be studied.
- Most educational programs running in a community setting attract pre-school age children especially where anganwadi coverage is insufficient or unsatisfactory. In such cases, convergence with local anganwadi should be planned or re-organization/clustering of AIE/AS centres to enable one instructor to teach older children while the other caters to pre-school age children.

#### On provision of upper primary schools:

The importance given by SSA to improving provision of upper primary schools is clearly visible in field visits, in data and in discussions.<sup>2</sup> The first two steps of comprehensive provision of upper primary schooling opportunities are : schools and teachers. Both of these elements have received focused attention under SSA. Wherever there are gaps, the gaps are known both at the village level as well as at block and district level. The attention being paid to upper primary is much needed and welcome. The gains made in the first several years of SSA need to be strengthened in the years ahead. Here are some issues to keep in mind as forward planning is being done.

- Advance planning is needed, to ensure effective transition from primary to upper primary schools. The “catchment” area of upper primary schools need to be mapped by clusters so that the location of new upper primary schools as well as enrollment of the graduates of primary schools can be planned. This exercise needs to be done locally. In preparation for large-scale “catchment” area mapping, sample studies need to be conducted in districts (both in areas with difficult access as well as in areas with easy access) to develop simple and useful community-based methods for mapping. The studies may be useful in refining the state norms for establishing new upper primary schools.
- There is a large and growing private sector in the primary and upper primary school sector in Uttar Pradesh, in urban as well as rural areas. Evidence suggests that there are movements of children between the two types of schools. The role of private sector provision in terms of increasing access at village and cluster level is not well understood. The Mission recommends a

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<sup>2</sup> Upper primary was not part of DPEP. Thus much of the visible efforts in recent years in upper primary has been facilitated by SSA.

study be commissioned to explore the links between government provision of upper primary schools and the availability of private schools.

### 3. Equity

**Development Objective 2:** To narrow existing gender and social gaps so that enrollment of girls will be near parity with boys, enrollment of children of SC and ST will be near parity with that of the other groups; and enrollment of children with disability will increase.

**Progress:** There is clear acceptance at all levels of the need to increase equity within the system. Programs for girls, SC and ST children and children with disabilities are being widely implemented. The trend line in terms of participation appears positive; nevertheless, there are wide discrepancies among schools.

**Issues and recommendations:** Looking ahead, in order to ensure that equal opportunities are provided to all children and that society as a whole benefits from the contributions of all of its members, the following issues need to be kept in mind:

#### On children with special needs:

Government strategy is to integrate children with mild to moderate disability into regular classrooms as part of universalisation of primary education, with special centers developed for children with severe disability. There is support from the state, district and block levels for this objective. Training sessions to help teachers provide support to children with disability were observed over the course of the visit. Convergence with the Handicapped Welfare Department and collaboration with ALIMCO provide for corrective surgery for children with orthopedic disability, as well as assessment of disability needs and provision of calipers.

- There is better identification of children with visible disability, but many children with less visible disability are being missed. A statistical exercise is needed to create accurate assessment of disability needs, along with development of a more robust identification strategy (beyond household surveys done by teachers).
- SSA policy for children with special needs is based on a comprehensive programme of providing inclusive education services based on need of every child with a disability. This also includes providing support to the child as close to home as possible. The state should ensure that development of its own program is based on this principle, with provision for regular external evaluation of the program.
- Support services for children with disability are weak, but a system of mobile support has been proposed for 2005-06.
- The state has not yet provided sufficient material and policy support for the programs in support of blind and deaf children. Braille materials for blind children are currently not widely available, but development of such materials has been proposed in 2005-06. Support for use of sign language should also be developed for deaf children.



- Provision of glasses is being tested currently on a small scale in several districts and should be expanded as appropriate.

#### On gender

The main strategies adopted by Government come under the general auspices of the National Program for Educating Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL). These include the establishment of Meena Manch multipurpose rooms in support of girls (nearly 8000), the provision of playground equipment and bicycles, and establishment of ECCE centres. The Meena Manch rooms provide reading materials, songs, opportunities for role playing, community outreach, etc., and appear to be enthusiastically received by girls. The study of learning achievement conducted by NCFRT identified girls as having lower levels of achievement than boys in mathematics; there were also significant gender differences for SC and ST children, with boys significantly outperforming girls in most areas.

- Girls' access is generally good at Standards 1 and 2 but decreases, often precipitously, at higher grade levels and for upper primary schooling. Security concerns of parents play a role in this decline, as does early marriage—55% of first children born are to mothers below the legal age of marriage.
- The provision of playground equipment is not an adequate response to gender issues observed and should be replaced by approaches that directly address identified issues and needs.
- Innovative activities that merit consideration in the coming year include: enrolment in national and state open schools, access to a package of incentives beyond free textbooks, and creation of short-term residential centers.
- The issue of early marriage requires concerted effort beyond what is already being done (life skills camps, textbooks)—this would be a good use of district innovation funds. One possibility would be to consider a scholarship incentives program for particularly at-risk girls.
- Meena Manch activities could be expanded downward to include 5<sup>th</sup> Standard girls—this would strengthen peer support for attendance, as well as transition of girls to upper primary.
- Specific gender strategies should be embedded within policies to improve learning and attendance for SC/ST children.

#### On Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe:

Under SSA, strategies in support of SC/ST children are to figure prominently in district and sub-district plans. All SC/ST children are to receive free textbooks. In addition, microplanning is intended to identify specific approaches as needed such as remedial programs to improve learning, community mobilization to increase SC/ST attendance, etc. The study of learning achievement conducted by NCERT identified SC and ST children as having lower levels of learning in virtually all subject areas, and noted that SC/ST boys generally outperformed girls in all areas. The provision of free textbooks has taken place and appears to have been successfully implemented. All SC/ST children in schools visited were reported to have the appropriate textbooks. There was little

evidence, however, of microplanning to identify specific approaches to improve learning and, in particular, attendance.

- There is insufficient knowledge of what influences ST/Sc' attendance and enrolment; a qualitative case study investigating percentages of SC/ST children attending public and private schools would help to clarify issues and develop proactive strategies.
- Microplanning to identify approaches to increase SC/ST attendance and learning should be strengthened. This will include strategies to improve the performance and participation of SC/ST girls; a portion of the district innovation funds could be used to implement district-specific interventions for SC/ST children.

#### 4. Quality

**Development Objective 3:** To enhance the quality of education of all elementary school students so that learning will be improved and transition rates from primary and upper primary education will increase.

**Progress:** Over the last decade, as school enrollments at all levels have increased, Uttar Pradesh has struggled with high student-teacher ratios. These ratios have doubtless contributed to the low levels of student achievement at the end of Class 5 as reported in a 2003 study by NCERT. These issues have been dealt with proactively in 2004-2005 through massive recruitment of regular teachers and the recruitment and training of shiksha mitras. Under a special BTC recruitment, 46000 new teachers were recruited and trained. Recruitment of 55000 shiksha mitras has been completed. Pupil-teacher ratios have dropped significantly and the state government is aiming to get as close as possible to the recommended norm of 1:40 by the start of the new school year in July 2005. In a state of this size, and with a history of complexity in teacher recruitment, Uttar Pradesh is to be strongly commended for speed and scale in accomplishing this massive effort. In addition, the state has to be given credit for responding quickly in terms of government orders and recruitment action in revising norms of Shiksha Mitra recruitment. This revision of rules enables even one-teacher schools to now absorb up to two Shiksha Mitras. A special initiative to improve quality has been launched with computers and solar panels which is currently being implemented in a small number of upper primary schools.

**Issues and recommendations:** In looking ahead the following need to be kept in mind:

On teacher recruitment:

- Some districts continue to have sanctioned posts that have not been filled. Typically in low literacy districts it has been difficult to find candidates from those districts who meet the state level criteria in terms of marks and education. District-specific teacher recruitment drives need to be conducted urgently to fill these gaps prior to the 2005-2006 school year.

#### On teacher rationalization:

The state level aggregate PTR has declined from 1:66 in July 2004 to 1:52 by December 2004. Such declines need to be tracked by district, block and cluster. Identifying blocks and clusters where PTRs continue to be well above average will help in focusing efforts in teacher rationalization within that area.

- Efforts to lower pupil-teacher ratios should focus on distribution of PTRs across schools rather than just average ratio.
- Double shifting or other measures may be considered on a short-term basis to lower PTRs

#### On pre-service and in-service teacher education:

Subject wise teacher training in upper primary grades as well as English and Sanskrit training for primary teachers has been completed. Training has been accompanied by teacher handbooks in all these content areas. All Shiksha Mitras have undergone 30 days of residential training. In each subsequent year, 20 days of in-service training has been planned for regular teachers and 15 days of refresher training for shiksha mitras.

- 2 elements can be included in all training programs: first, team teaching in predominantly small group interactions; second, involving children daily in all training sessions. Working with the same group of children during the entire duration of the training period can improve the effectiveness of training and help develop individualized, child-centered teaching.
- Assessment of pre- and in-service teacher education should be carried out, including provision for impact evaluation as part of planning training programs. Indicators should be developed to show achievement of specific, quality-focused and other targets (i.e. rather than note that 91,000 head masters were given leadership training, it would be more helpful to note the specific objectives of the course and the percentage of those trained who exhibited the desired competencies).
- Given the increasing demands for training and instructional support, vacant posts at the DIET level should be urgently filled.
- Content of training should be flexible enough to include district and block materials and needs.

#### On measurement of student learning outcomes:

The NCERT study of student achievement at Class 5 notes differences in learning based on gender, student category, and rural/urban differences. Adequate planning of strategies to improve teaching and learning quality will require much more specific information about learning patterns within the state as well as across levels. A sample-based, standardized achievement test would give immediate policy-relevant feedback about who is learning and who is not, and would be an important complement to broader national-level tests whose implementation is planned. It would also provide a basis for development of monitorable learning goals.

- Development of reliable testing of student achievement that could be carried out annually on a sample basis to develop trend lines for all districts and inform policy dialogue at the state level.
- Establishment of monitorable goals for student learning.
- Creation of a strategy to contain disparities based on gender, SC/ST, rural/urban

#### On instructional leadership.

There is no clear policy or practice in terms of developing and supporting instructional leadership within the system. Headmaster training was recently provided to 91,000 headmasters. Frequent visits to schools by cluster resource and BRC personnel provide a potential platform for significantly increasing instructional support, but these visits currently are generally administrative in nature and provide little apparent support for an instructional leadership role for the headmaster.

- NPRCs and BRCs both should be oriented more toward provision of instructional leadership, rather than administrative leadership or narrow focus on TLM.
- Explicit guidelines should be developed for classroom visits and follow-up support to teachers and headmasters on an ongoing basis.
- Designing and implementing effective academic supervision/pedagogical leadership for schools needs to be reconceptualized and the current grading system for schools needs revision.
- Student learning achievement surveys indicate unsatisfactory levels of learning at all grade-levels in primary schools in UP. Based on local needs, districts and blocks need to experiment with the effectiveness of remedial programs (of different content and duration) for improving basic learning. Accelerated learning techniques need to be used to help children “catch up” so that they can continue their education successfully through primary school and beyond.

#### On textbooks:

Textbooks were almost universally available. Textbooks are already distributed to a total of 141 lac girls and SC/ST children. In the schools observed, the distribution appeared to have been managed very effectively. The textbook situation should be further improved next year upon implementation of a program to provide all remaining children (i.e. non-SC/ST boys) with textbooks. This is a welcome initiative from the state budget that merits consideration in other states. There did not appear, however, to be wide availability of books for reading for pleasure—there were modest library shelves available in many classrooms, but generally without sufficient numbers of reading materials. The Meena Manch program for girls is a significant exception to this observation, with girls expressing great enthusiasm for the books and indicating that they frequently read them for pleasure. Such opportunities should be available to all children as a regular feature of schools monitored by the NPRC and BRC.

#### On knowledge management:

Development and adoption of a knowledge management policy would focus on the circulation of information within the system, and the creation of knowledge vital to ongoing evolution of the sector. For instance, SIEMAT and SCERT personnel need to

ensure that DIET personnel have full access to emerging research studies, with the opportunity to participate in action research and to prepare and receive feedback on professional papers. Closer collaboration with NCERT and among resource groups of the state and the district should be developed, and professional associations within the sector should be strengthened.

#### On teacher absenteeism:

Teacher absenteeism was not observed to be a significant issue in the schools visited (unlike student absenteeism). It was not reported as a problem by BRCs or NPRCs, nor was it flagged by school heads. Perusal of record books showed very limited teacher absences in recent months. This is contrary to recently published reports, and bears much closer examination. A study of teacher absenteeism proposed by SIS will provide an opportunity for a better understanding of what is occurring.

On time on task: Several factors were observed that can be expected to significantly reduce actual learning in the classroom. First, student absenteeism is high—well over 50% in some cases (due variously to festivals, marriages and bad weather) on certain days, and averaging close to 70% overall. Second, teachers routinely use teaching methods that involve participation of one student at a time while other students wait their turn to respond. Third, class sizes are high and space is limited, meaning that considerable time is spent in organizing and managing the classroom. Many teachers also must care for younger siblings of students, further reducing time for teaching. And finally, teacher absenteeism is reported to be a problem, although this was not observed during the JRM visits. It is proposed that a review of time on task be conducted, as a way both of getting an understanding of the comparative scope of the issue, and as a way of sensitizing teachers, headmasters and other personnel to the importance of maximizing learning time, and actively seeking solutions.

## **5. Governance, Finance and Procurement**

**Progress:** Significant strides have been made in terms of implementation and speeding up the flow of funds through electronic transfers. SSA has also involved a wide range of partners in program implementation. However, a number of significant shortcomings remain which will need to be corrected in order to ensure the timeliness and effectiveness of future implementation. A detailed note on Finance and Procurement issues is enclosed at Annex 1 to this report. The key issues and recommendations are summarized below.

### **Issues and recommendations:**

#### On adequate and timely availability of funds

The flow of funds to SIS has not been as per the prescribed calendar. This has affected planning at the SIS level and the pace of implementation of the program. GoUP has been releasing its share of funds in all the years but releases have not been timely.

- Adequate budgetary provision be made for the programme and funds should be released timely. There is need to further impress upon the state to release its share in a timely manner.

#### On flow of funds from the SIS to Districts and from Districts to Sub-districts

The speed of funds transfer from SIS to districts has increased significantly since August 2004 with the SIS transferring funds electronically. **This model may be adopted nationally.** This has led to increase in the pace of utilization and it is creditable that expenditure in 2004-05 so far has more than doubled (an increase of more than Rs 500 crore) than the expenditure in previous year. However, one shortcoming has been that funds are being released in fragmented manner (64 tranches in 2003-04 and 39 tranches so far in 2004-05). This needs to be rationalized. While, funds transfer to sub-districts is also efficient (by using credit advices instead of cheques), there are delays in actual release. These delays are partly on account of lack of pre-planning and partly due to lack of clarity of instructions and effective monitoring by the DPOs.

- The transfer of funds from districts needs to be expedited by ensuring that the pre-disbursement planning is completed in the beginning of the year (and not after grants are received from the SIS) and by rationalizing the account details of VECs so that these details are not to be verified every time that funds are to be transferred. The funds transfer should be accompanied by clear instructions that should be copied to the VECs also. Administratively, BSAs have to involve themselves more and funds transfer should not be left entirely to Accounts officers. A related issue is that funds for training are first transferred to DIETs and then by DIETs to BRCs by cheques. This transfer may also be done by way of credit advices.

#### On monitoring of Expenditure

Regular (monthly) monitoring of expenditure is made at the SPO level but no expenditure monitoring is being done by DPOs. The position regarding availability of Utilization Certificates (UC) for 2003-04 at districts is also not satisfactory.

- Receipt of UCs at the DPOs should be an item of monthly monitoring at the SPO level. The state may consider prescribing that UCs for all expenditure be submitted within one month of utilization. Otherwise, there would be immense pressure upon the DPOs to collect these at the end of the year and this may derail the schedule of annual audits.

#### On accounts and record keeping at the sub-district level

The quality of record keeping is very variable. In general, no account is kept of the receipts (these are to be gleaned from the passbooks) and at places even the expenditure vouchers were not maintained properly. VECs are not consulted on expenditure decisions and receipts and expenditure are not publicly displayed.

- Substantial expenditure is being incurred at sub-district levels and it is important that it is properly accounted for. Clear guidelines need to be circulated to VECs, BRCs and NPRC regarding the records to be kept and the method of accounting for receipts and expenditure. It would be useful to have a short- manual prepared on the basis of the FMP Manual and impart training to various functionaries in its implementation. A method needs to be evolved to ensure that at least some checks are made by supervisory officers on accounts of sub-district entities and that the system of audit by LF audit is operationalized.

### On utilization of Grant

The grant for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring has been effectively utilized at the SPO level and 10 very useful studies have been commissioned. However, this grant is not being utilized properly at the districts and DIETs. DIETs are using the grant as office contingency while the districts have yet to decide how to use this money, even after 10 months of the financial year have lapsed.

- SIS should urgently devote attention to this key aspect of the program and at least for next year develop proper guidelines and a plan for key activities to be undertaken at the district and sub-district level for effective use of this money and also ensure that these funds are released to the districts at the beginning of the year so that evaluation and monitoring may be done throughout the year.

### On accounting for Civil Works

*Significant progress in civil works obtained this year and a record number of new school buildings have already been completed.* In few districts, work was affected due to non-availability of bricks and since December work is affected due to non-availability of funds. There are concerns regarding few districts where significant %age of works sanctioned this year have not been started and closer monitoring at district level is required. The system of quality checking at school level needs to be strengthened.

- The system of Quality Control needs improvement. PAB (for 2004-05) had asked the SPD to engage third party engineering firms to supervise and check quality of civil works. This needs to be explored and if such firms are not available possibilities of retaining retired engineers on honorarium basis as State Quality Monitors, on the pattern of PMGSY, may also be considered.

### On audit of Accounts

The quality of external audit by CA firms for the year 2003-04 is less than satisfactory and audit reports do not provide sufficient details as per the TOR. The internal audit cell is not operational.

- Selection of good auditors with clear TORs and provision of adequate time and remuneration is a must to ensure that a proper audit of accounts is done. This may be ensured next year. The internal audit cell should be activated to assist in the monitoring function.

### On roll out of the FMP Manual

Although the FMP manual is yet to be adopted by the Executive Committee of the state, planning has begun at the SIS level to implement the manual at an early date. At the SIS level some of the prescribed registers have been opened. However, accounting on double entry basis is not being done. At the district level accountants have been imparted training but there is little progress towards following the accounting procedure prescribed in the manual. Staff is short at the district level.

- The SIS may take the assistance of an expert agency in training of its staff in the principles and practice of double entry bookkeeping and in switch over to the system of book keeping as suggested in the manual at least by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005. This would also require that the manual be made available in Hindi and a separate brief manual is prepared for sub-district level detailing the requirements at that level. It

is highly recommended that at the sub-district level only most essential registers are prescribed. SIS may also consider implementation of a computer based accounting system at the state and district level and integrating the MIS reporting prescribed by GOI with the accounting system.

#### On procurement Review

Review of textbook procurement at the State level reveals several procedural weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses have been addressed for the Year 2005-06. Procurement at district and sub-district levels also needs improvement.

- More strict guidelines for procurement need to be framed and need for competitive tendering reemphasized. This should be coupled with regular procurement audits at various levels.

#### On preparation of Context specific Micro-plans

The planning at the district level is being done in a very mechanical and standard manner and does not reveal that district teams are applying themselves to local issues. There is, apparently, no consultations with the local community and CSOs. As a result, the flexibility available in the SSA framework is not being fully utilized to develop local strategies.

- For the program to assume the shape of a movement community based local planning should be encouraged. This would require that more time be made available for the preparations of plans and standardization is de-emphasized. It should be ensured that DISE data for the current academic year is available for purposes of planning for the next year. It may also be examined whether sample data on key indicators (enrolment, gender and community parity etc.) should not be collected so that the plans are based on the latest situation.

#### On community management of program

VECs are not fully involved in the management of schools. There is very minimal role of PTAs/MTAs. There is no role of VECs /local community in monitoring of the program.

- Concerted efforts are required to increase the involvement of the community. This may be done by increased transparency, publicity, using the NGOs for creating awareness and also by more emphasis on social audits and community-based monitoring of the program.

#### On ownership and civil society participation:

- Although there are NGOs involved in program implementation especially in the EGS/AIE/AS programs greater participation needs to be encouraged at all levels and for a variety of activities. In order to do this effectively, current procedures for identifying and appraising NGOs should be revisited. Processes for approving plans and releasing funds needs to be speeded up so that proposed NGO activities can begin at the beginning of the school year.
- Districts should be allowed flexibility and decision-making authority in being able to include individuals and institutions in capacity building and for research and monitoring activities.



- To widen the base of participation, it is imperative that there is broad based awareness of the provisions and opportunities available under SSA. A basic pamphlet in Hindi outlining objectives of SSA, norms, activities and proposed partnerships should be the main content of the pamphlet which will be made widely available to the public.

#### On co-ordination between the SIS and the State Government

For the past three months State project Director is also holding the charge of Secretary, Elementary Education. This has greatly facilitated the program as several policy initiatives such as revision in the unit cost of buildings, revision in the norms for recruitment of para teachers, and release of funds have been expedited. The Text book purchase policy for Year 2005-06 has been finalized now while it was done in April 2004 for year 2004-05.

- As successful implementation of an ambitious program like SSA requires several policy changes, wherever feasible, these jobs should be combined. GOI may like to share this experience with other states.

#### On convergence with the Programs of other Departments

State has successfully dovetailed the schemes of other departments with the SSA. For example, toilets in schools are being funded by a scheme of Panchayati Raj department, kitchens in schools are being constructed through rural development scheme and an ambitious health program is being launched for school children through WB funded Health project.

#### On state norms for opening new PS and UPS

At present new PS is opened if there is no school within 1.5 Km and if the population of habitation is at least 300. New UPS are opened if there is no UPS within 3 KM. There is no upper bound on the size of the school and as a result there are a large number of PSs in the state having more than 500 children. State is planning to construct additional rooms. It may be examined, if it would not be better to have more number of smaller PSs closer to the habitation rather than providing infrastructure for >500 children in one location. Since SSA norms provide only 3 teachers for new UPS, this may result in understaffed schools. Given that state norms are to provide 5 teachers for new UPS, it may be examined whether two additional teachers for each new UPS under SSA can be financed by the state itself.

- The norms for setting up of new PS and UPS may be reviewed by the state.

#### On staff for DIETs

At present, lecturers for DIETs are sourced from amongst the secondary school teachers, who have no experience of teaching at the primary level. The DIET vacancies are difficult to fill up as sufficient number of willing teachers are often not available. The state is now planning to create a new cadre of DIET lecturers, by recruiting DIET lecturers on contract basis.

- Decision regarding restructuring the cadre of DIET staff may be expedited. In the interim it may be explored whether lecturers may be invited on a visiting basis.

## Report on the Finance and Procurement Issues

### 1. Release of Funds by GOI and GoUP

Details of funds released for the SSA (including NPEGEL) program in UP are given below:

(Rs crore)					
	Year	Approved Outlay	Funds Released		
			GOI	GoUP	Total
1	2001-02	188.06	76.63	13.52	90.15
2	2002-03	430.75	201.66	67.23	268.89
3	2003-04	1095.1	349.43	113.47	453.90
4	2004-05 (Dec 2004)	1604.5	577.61	192.53	770.14

The state has provided its share (15% or 25%) of the program in all the years. However, the release of funds has not followed the calendar prescribed in the manual. The reasons for this include: (i) delays in preparation, submission and approval of AWP&Bs, (ii) delay in submission of Utilisation Certificates by the state, and (iii) inadequate provisions in the budget. Release of large quantities of money in the last few months of the financial year results in compromised quality of expenditure and should be avoided.

*Recommendation: Adequate budgetary provision be made for the programme and funds should be released timely. There is need to further impress upon the state to release its share in a timely manner.*

### 2. Flow of Funds from SIS to Districts and Sub-Districts

#### 2.1 SIS to Districts

As a result of fragmented and delayed releases by GOI and GoUP, the SIS has also not been adhering to the schedule of releasing funds within 15 days of their receipt. In 2003-04 funds received in September 2003 were released to districts over next five months. While, this has improved in 2004-05, funds received in October 2004 were released in several installments over next two months. It is also noted that releases from SIS are made in several installments in a fragmented manner. For example, funds in 2003-04 were transferred in 64 tranches and in 2004-05, funds have been transferred in 39 tranches so far. Such transfers not only mean that senior officers at the SIS are constantly busy with releases but it also increases the load on accounting system manifold and also delays the transfers at districts.

The SIS has started transferring funds to districts electronically since August 2004, which has drastically reduced the time for flow of funds, has significantly improved the pace of implementation, and has simultaneously reduced scope for corrupt practices. While, in the earlier system, it sometimes took more than a month for the cheques to be credited in the accounts of districts, this has been reduced to a week in the new system. The only improvement that could be suggested here is

that the standard procedure should prescribe that the intimation from SIS to districts should be used as an instrument for updating the cashbook as otherwise districts wait for the passbooks to be updated before taking credit of the transfer. **Government of India may consider advising other states also to adopt the 'UP method' of release of funds.**

## 2.2 Districts to Sub-Districts

The funds transfer to sub-district level is being effected with delays in both the districts and as a result there are substantial balances at the district level. For example closing balance at Kheri on 31/12/2004 was Rs 2.95 crore and in Unnao the balance was Rs 1.35 crore. The discussion with the district authorities revealed that this delay is occasioned by:

- Time taken in confirming the account details of the sub-district entities. At times, funds are to be re-sent as wrong account numbers have been indicated.
- At times, details of the requirement for specific schemes are obtained from sub-district levels and this delays the transfers.
- Lack of clarity of instructions. For example, in Kheri district, out of a grant of Rs 28.67 lakh for TLM, Rs 20.87 lakh have been in balance for few months as the DPO believes that TLM is not to be provided to para teachers while actually it is to be distributed to both teachers and para teachers. In Unnao also, only Rs 3.49 lakh has been transferred as TLM to UPS out of Rs 18.42 lakh that was received.

The discussion also revealed that while transferring funds to the VECs no written instructions / guidelines are provided and the transfer is informed verbally to the Head Teacher. This implies that the VEC is totally dependent on the head teacher for information regarding funds. This leads to weakening of control of the VEC over school management. The transfer of funds from districts also is by way of credit advice and this is as efficient as it could be given the fact that VEC accounts have been opened in all types of banks.

*Recommendation: The transfer of funds from districts needs to be expedited by ensuring that the pre-disbursement planning is completed in the beginning of the year (and not after grants are received from the SIS) and by rationalizing the account details of VECs so that these details are not to be verified every time that funds are to be transferred. The funds transfer should be accompanied by clear instructions that should be copied to the VECs also. Administratively, BSAs have to involve themselves more and funds transfer should not be left entirely to Accounts officers. A related issue is that funds for training are first transferred to DIETs and then by DIETs to BRCs by cheques. This transfer may also be done by way of credit advices.*

## 3. **Timely Monitoring of Expenditure**

Regular monthly monitoring of transfers by the DPOs and expenditure at DPOs / DIETs is done at the SPO. A good practice is that the district officers are required to bring their passbooks to the meeting and these are checked. *However, at the DPO level no monitoring of expenditure being made at the BRCs/NPRCs/VECs is being done.*

The position regarding utilization certificates is not satisfactory. The instructions contained in the FMP manual are not being followed. For example, large number of civil works of Year 2003-04 have been completed this year and UCs for these should

be available with the DPOs within one month of completion but these are not being monitored. Similar is the case of UCs for salary of para teachers which should be available within one month of the end of quarter. As a result, SIS may find it difficult to finalize its accounts in time.

*Recommendation: Receipt of UCs at the DPOs should be an item of monthly monitoring at the SPO level. The state may consider prescribing that UCs for all expenditure be submitted within one month of utilization. Otherwise, there would be immense pressure upon the DPOs to collect these at the end of the year and this may derail the schedule of annual audits.*

#### 4. Accounts and Record Keeping at Sub-district level

We examined records of 6 schools, 2 BRCs and 1 NPRC in two districts. The record keeping at BRC, Nawabganj was good, although no bank reconciliation had ever been done. At NPRC, Bainthar, funds were received in March 2004 (for 2003-04) and in December 2004 for 2004-05. Although, Rs 6000 had been withdrawn this year expenditure vouchers were available only for Rs 3200. The accounts had never been seen by any officer. In the schools, that we visited, the quality was quite variable. While, in some schools proper record of all receipts and expenditure were available, it was not so in some other schools. Some of the common shortcomings in school records were:

- No record of receipt of grants. Only expenditure was recorded while receipts had to be tallied from the passbook.
- Expenditure vouchers were certified only by the head teacher in several cases.
- VEC was not consulted on how the money received was to be utilized. Community had no role in prioritization.
- No UCs were available. In some schools, it was informed that UCs had been sent to the blocks but office copies were not available.
- At no school, receipt and expenditure information was displayed publicly.
- VEC accounts are to be audited by Local Fund Auditors. However, no audit has been performed, at least in the last two years.
- Till last year TLM grants were being released along with the salaries and it was extremely difficult to know whether they were properly utilized. While, this anomaly has been removed this year and these grants are also being released to VECs, utilization of these grants has been very slow. While VECs are quick to utilize the maintenance grants, the TLM grants have still not been made available to all the teachers and in none of the schools that we visited, records were available as to how this grant has been used so far. The purpose of TLM grant would be defeated if these are utilized at the end of the year.

*Recommendation: Substantial expenditure is being incurred at sub-district levels and it is important that it is properly accounted for. Clear guidelines need to be circulated to VECs, BRCs and NPRC regarding the records to be kept and the method of accounting for receipts and expenditure. It would be useful to have a short- manual prepared on the basis of the FMP Manual and impart training to various functionaries. A method needs to be evolved to ensure that at least some checks are made by supervisory officers on accounts of sub-district entities and that the system of audit by LF audit is operationalized.*

## 5. Utilization of Grants

*There is a concern that the funds released for the important activity of Research, Evaluation and Monitoring are not being properly utilized at the districts and DIETs. Last year, funds on this account were released only to DIETs and no funds were made available to the DPOs. This year, funds have been released to both the DPOs (@ Rs 750 per school) and DIETs (@ Rs 300 per school). These funds have been released in November 2004 but in both Unnao and Kheri no funds have been utilized so far and the DPOs are still planning how to make use of these funds. On the other hand DIETs have been using this money for meeting the requirement of office contingency. For example, DIET Kheri utilized Rs 2.43 lakh out of a total grant of Rs 5.97 received in 2003-04. This was largely spent on petrol, purchase of stationery, renovation of the office of Principal, DIET and release of publicity advertisements. This year also, funds are being used by DIET in a similar manner. In SSA the emphasis is on developing community based monitoring system and involving independent resource persons and NGOs in evaluation and monitoring of the program. This purpose would not be served if DPOs use this yearly grant in last two months of the financial year and if DIETs use this grant for office contingencies. It may, however, be noted that at the state level 10 studies have already been awarded out of Rs 3 crore to be spent by the SPO.*

*Recommendation: SIS should urgently devote attention to this key aspect of the program and at least for next year develop proper guidelines and a plan for key activities to be undertaken at the district and sub-district level for effective use of this money and also ensure that these funds are released to the districts at the beginning of the year so that evaluation and monitoring may be done throughout the year.*

## 6. Accounting for Civil Works

*Significant progress has been reported in completion of civil works this year. Of the PS /UPS school buildings sanctioned till 2003-04 more than 86% have been completed by 31 December 2004. Similarly, of the 10229 additional rooms sanctioned till 2003-04 9796 (93%) were complete by 31 December 2004. The status of civil works sanctioned in 2004-05 (as on 31/12/04) is given below:*

	Work	Sanctioned	Completed	In -progress	Yet to begin
1	PS Building	4757	27	3451	1279
2	UPS Building	2908	17	2068	796
3	Addl. Class Rooms	18552	1064	12809	4679

- Progress has been affected by lack of funds in case of new buildings.
- Although, funds for additional classrooms have been released in full, at places progress has been affected due to non-availability of bricks.

The progress of civil works is being monitored regularly at the SIS level and recently unit costs have also been revised after a lapse of 6 years. This should result in faster implementation and better quality of construction. *However, at the sub-district level,*

*monitoring needs to improve as construction is yet to begin in more than 25% of the additional class rooms approved for the year.*

At the school level, records of purchase of material and payment for labor are to be kept and the JEs of RES are expected to check the quality at pre-specified intervals. *However, the system of quality control does not seem to be functioning well.* At village Ashapur Kheda, where two additional rooms have been constructed, no records of quality checks were available. Similarly, at Village Banni, where NPEGEL room is under construction, no records of inspection by a JE were available. Also, manuals have been circulated in English and they do not very clearly detail how the teacher / pradhan should plan the procurement of materials through the construction of the work.

*Recommendation: The system of Quality Control needs improvement. PAB (for 2001-05) had asked the SPD to engage third party engineering firms to supervise and check quality of civil works. This needs to be explored and if such firms are not available possibilities of retaining retired engineers on honorarium basis as State Quality Monitors, on the pattern of PMGSY, may also be considered.*

## **7. Audit of Accounts**

### **7.1 External Audit by CA**

The accounts of the SIS and the district / sub-district offices for 2003-04 have been audited by CA firms. Five firms were engaged in June 2004 on the basis of an advertisement and the TOR prescribed in the manual. However, there was no occasion for financial evaluation as they were all offered the rate finalized in the previous year- Rs 5324 for a district and Rs 7000 for SIS. In addition, they were to be reimbursed actual TA/DA for a maximum of 7 days.

District offices were allocated to various auditors and one auditor (Lead auditor) was given the responsibility of compiling the records of all districts and for preparing the management letter.

The reports for Kheri, Unnao and SIS have been examined and in our opinion the audit, especially at the districts, is extremely perfunctory. The major shortcomings are:

- There is no evidence that the auditors have examined the records of any sub-district entity. The statements of entities that were audited on a sample basis are not available.
- Only trial balances have been audited at the district level. No receipt expenditure account has been prepared or audited.
- The audited expenditure figures do not always tally with the figures reported in the SOE item-wise.
- The TORs mention that the auditors have to report on the accuracy of the financial progress submitted by the audited entity, comment on the procurement methods, and also comment whether funds have been utilized for the purpose for which they were given. None of this has been done.
- The Management letter is very general in its observation and at times contradictory. For example, its observations that at some BRCs Books of account/ Bank Statement were not prepared are not of much use for follow-up. Further,

statement that at some units documentary evidence regarding payment for free text books were not produced raises serious concern as to how expenditure statements for those units have been certified by auditors.

It is noted that Annual Report for the Year 2003-04 is not yet ready and even though audited accounts have been submitted to the GOI, these are yet to be adopted by the executive committee. Further, although audit reports were received in October 2004, the observations are yet to be circulated to district offices for corrective action.

*Recommendation: Selection of good auditors with clear TORs and provision of adequate time and remuneration is a must to ensure that a proper audit of accounts is done. This may be ensured next year.*

#### 7.2 Internal Audit

Although 2 internal auditors are available in the SIS, no internal audit is being done.

*Recommendation: The internal audit cell should be activated to assist in the monitoring function.*

#### 7.3 CAG Audit

It was informed that CAG audit of the SSA has not been done in the recent past.

*To sum up, the audit function needs to be streamlined and strengthened. In the absence of proper audits at various levels the financial control at the district and sub-district levels is weak. It is urgently required that is addressed on priority.*

### 8 **Roll out of the FMP Manual**

Although, the executive committee at the state level is yet to approve the adoption of the FMP manual, action has been initiated to implement the manual in the state. The requirements of the manual are well understood at the state level and all the accounts officers up to district level have been given training in the manual for 3 days. However, the fundamentals of the manual are yet to be implemented:

- (a) The concept of double-entry accounting is yet to be introduced at any level.
- (b) Even at the SIS, expenditure head-wise ledgers are not been maintained. Register of advances has been maintained at the SIS and in Kheri but not in Unnao. However, this register is not serving the purpose of a monitoring tool in the absence of posting of utilization / expenditure.
- (c) All the registers prescribed in the manual are not being maintained. *(It is, however, to be noted, that in the manual more than one register has been prescribed for the same purpose e.g. advances to staff and this list needs to be reviewed.)* At the district level, important registers such as fixed asset register is not being maintained.
- (d) While Bank Reconciliation is being done monthly at SIS and in Kheri, it was not being done regularly at Unnao and no reconciliation was being done at sub-district levels.
- (e) The account codes need to be further rationalized and uniform codes used at all levels in the books.
- (f) Sufficient accounting staff is not available at district level. Only one assistant accounts officer (AAO) is posted at Unnao while at Kheri one AAO and an accountant are available. The staff is short at the SIS level also. Given the detailed accounting requirements adequate staff should be posted especially at the district level.

In sum, the FMP manual is yet to be fully implemented in the state and it is assessed that substantial capacity building efforts are required if accounts are to be kept as per the manual even by the next financial year.

*Recommendation: The SIS may take the assistance of an expert agency in training of its staff in the principles and practice of double entry bookkeeping and in switch over to the system of book keeping as suggested in the manual at least by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005. This would also require that the manual be made available in Hindi and a separate brief manual is prepared for sub-district level detailing the requirements at that level. It is highly recommended that at the sub-district level only most essential registers are prescribed. SIS may also consider implementation of a computer based accounting system at the state and district level and integrating the MIS reporting prescribed by GOI with the accounting system.*

## 9. Procurement Review

SIS has decided to adopt the state procurement rules that generally prescribe that purchases should be made through open tenders. *As regards the procurement plan a format has been completed only recently but it is not being used for any monitoring purposes.*

Review of three purchases was made, one each at State, District and Village, as detailed below.

(a) Purchase of Text Books: Textbook purchase is finalized by Director, primary Education and orders on selected firms are made by district officers. For 2004-05 the tender was approved only in June. As a result, purchases were delayed. The notable features of this purchase are:

- After bids were received, work was allotted to all the qualifying firms as per their offered bid at the lowest rates.
- The agreement condition that 30% deduction would be made in case paper quality was not up to the standard. However, this condition was changed by the government in October 2004 to the extent that the deduction would be made at the rate of 5% for each of the six technical requirements on paper quality, after supplies were received.
- Tenders were received for only 74% of the quantity that was required. It is not clear how rest of the demand has been met.

The key concerns here are the involvement of government during the purchase process and revision of the procedures on year-to-year basis. Another issue is that when the bidders know from the past experience that work would be allotted to all the technically qualified bidders on the basis of the lowest rate, how would it ever be ensured that the offered rates are competitive?

Another issue that is related to the quality of text books is that most of the text books of class I and II students that we saw were torn with cover pages and several pages missing. Considering that text books for lower classes are more likely to be mishandled, the requirements on paper and stitching of these text books be made more stringent. Another issue is that instead of text books, cash is supplied to the EGS instructors. Instead of this textbooks to the EGS center may be made available through the corresponding primary school.



(b) Purchase of Computers at District Unnao:

Funds were provided to the district for purchase of 15 computers and other accessories in November 2003. Open tenders were invited and the proposal to purchase at the lowest rate was submitted to the District Magistrate in January 2004. However, the DM directed that the purchase be made from NICS, a subsidiary of NIC, and finally computers were received only in July /August 2004. Although, purchases from NICS are as per GoUP procedure, this decision could have been taken earlier itself.

(c) Purchase of Swings at UPS, Banni, Kheri

Rs 15000 was received by the school for purchase of swings in 2003-04. An advance of Rs 15000 was given to one supplier in April 2004 who supplied the swings in June 2004. Upon query whether any comparative quotations were invited, the answer was in the negative and the Head teacher informed that advance was given to the above firm on the verbal instruction of a district officer.

*Recommendations: The above review suggests that the procurement methods at various levels need to be streamlined and regularly monitored / audited to ensure adherence to norms. The issue of adherence to norms for procurement made by agencies that are outside the purview of the SIS (such as department of handicapped welfare that was given a grant of more than Rs 1 crore) needs attention.*

#### **10. Issue: Preparation of Context specific Micro-plans**

**Status:** The planning at the district level is being done in a very mechanical and standard manner and does not reveal that district teams are applying themselves to local issues. There is, apparently, no consultations with the local community and CSOs. As a result, the flexibility available in the SSA framework is not being fully utilized to develop local strategies.

- *Recommendation: For the program to assume the shape of a movement community based local planning should be encouraged. This would require that more time be made available for the preparations of plans and standardization is de-emphasized. It should be ensured that DISE data for the current academic year is available for purposes of planning for the next year. It may also be examined whether sample data on key indicators (enrolment, gender and community parity etc.) should not be collected so that the plans are based on the latest situation.*

#### **11. Issue: Community Management of Program**

**Status:** VECs are not fully involved in the management of schools. There is very minimal role of PTAs/MTAs. There is no role of VECs /local community in monitoring of the program.

*Recommendation: Concerted efforts are required to increase the involvement of the community. This may be done by increased transparency, publicity, using the NGOs for creating awareness and also by more emphasis on social audits and community-based monitoring of the program.*

## **12. Issue: Ownership and civil society participation**

**Status and Recommendation :** Although there are NGOs involved in program implementation especially in the EGS/AIE/AS programs greater participation needs to be encouraged at all levels and for a variety of activities. In order to do this effectively, current procedures for identifying and appraising NGOs should be revisited. Processes for approving plans and releasing funds needs to be speeded up so that proposed NGO activities can begin at the beginning of the school year.

Districts should be allowed flexibility and decision-making authority in being able to include individuals and institutions in capacity building and for research and monitoring activities.

To widen the base of participation, it is imperative that there is broad based awareness of the provisions and opportunities available under SSA. A basic pamphlet in Hindi outlining objectives of SSA, norms, activities and proposed partnerships should be the main content of the pamphlet which will be made widely available to the public.

## **13. Issue: Co-ordination between the SIS and the State Government**

**Status:** For the past three months State project Director is also holding the charge of Secretary, Elementary Education. This has greatly facilitated the program as several policy initiatives such as revision in the unit cost of buildings, revision in the norms for recruitment of para teachers, and release of funds have been expedited. The Text book purchase policy for Year 2005-06 has been finalized now while it was done in April 2004 for year 2004-05.

*Recommendation: As successful implementation of an ambitious program like SSA requires several policy changes, wherever feasible, these jobs should be combined. GOI may like to share this experience with other states.*

## **14. Issue: Convergence with the Programs of other Departments**

**Status:** State has successfully dovetailed the schemes of other departments with the SSA. For example, toilets in schools are being funded by an scheme of panchayati raj department, kitchens in schools are being constructed through rural development scheme and an ambitious health program is being launched for school children through WB funded Health project.

## **15. Issue: State norms for opening new PS and UPS**

**Status:** At present new PS is opened if there is no school within 1.5 Km and if the population of habitation is at least 300. New UPS are opened if there is no UPS within 3 KM. There is no upper bound on the size of the school and as a result there are a large number of PSs in the state having more than 500 children. State is planning to construct additional rooms. It may be examined, if it would not be better to have more number of smaller PSs closer to the habitation rather than providing infrastructure for >500 children in one location. Since SSA norms provide only 3 teachers for new UPS, this may result in understaffed schools. Given that state norms are to provide 5 teachers for new UPS, it may be examined whether two additional teachers for each new UPS under SSA can be financed by the state itself.

*Recommendation: The norms for setting up of new PS and UPS may be reviewed by the state.*

**16. Issue: Staff for DIETs**

**Status:** At present, lecturers for DIETs are sourced from amongst the secondary school teachers, who have no experience of teaching at the primary level. The DIET vacancies are difficult to fill up as sufficient number of willing teachers are often not available. The state is now planning to create a new cadre of DIET lecturers, by recruiting DIET lecturers on contract basis.

*Recommendation: Decision regarding restructuring the cadre of DIET staff may be expedited. In the interim it may be explored whether lecturers may be invited on visiting basis.*

**INDIA**  
**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)**  
**FIRST JOINT REVIEW MISSION (JRM)**

**West Bengal State Report**  
**(26<sup>th</sup> January to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005)**

**1 Introduction**

1.1 On behalf of the 1<sup>st</sup> JRM of SSA Dr G C Upadhyay (GoI nominee) and Roger Cunningham (DFID) visited West Bengal from 26<sup>th</sup> January to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005. The mission assessed the progress being made towards the goals of SSA, and examined the institutional arrangements in place for effective implementation of the programme. In addition to discussions in the State capital of Kolkata, the mission visited the districts of Purba Medinipur and Bardhaman. The mission met with the Honourable Minister, School Education, the Secretary School Education, the State Project Director, and key officials from a range of State level institutions. At District level the mission met with the District Magistrates, Chairpersons of the District Primary Education Councils, District Project Directors and other key functionaries involved in SSA. The mission extends our appreciation to all who assisted us and gave so freely of their time, their knowledge and their hospitality.

1.2 Overall progress in implementation of SSA has been slow to pick up, but the basis is now laid for faster progress. The State has made significant progress in reducing the number of out of school children, particularly at the primary level where there is near universal enrolment. A major challenge remains in providing at the upper primary level. In terms of access, gender and social gaps are reducing, but large disparities remain with regard to the schooling experience of children from different backgrounds, with poorer children generally attending poorer resourced schools. The principal constraint to improving the quality of education is the high Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) resulting from the inability of the state to provide sufficient teachers. Programme delivery is well integrated in the strong Panchayat system with extensive participation in the programme of stakeholders through an often bewildering network of committees and groups. There is a need to focus more on function and achievement of outcomes rather than simply ensuring the structures are in place.

**2 Progress Towards Development Objectives**

*Objective 1: Reduction in number of children who are out of school*

2.1 Based on 2003/04 data, the State reports 14.14 lakh children of elementary school age currently out of school. At the primary level (age 5+ to 8+) there remain 3.25 lakh reported out of school and 10.89 lakh at the upper primary level (age 9+ to 13+)<sup>1</sup>. Using an age specific population figure projected from the 2001 Census (92.02 lakh) and actual enrolment (in all types of primary centres excluding unrecognised private schools) this gives a Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 100.77% and a Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of 96.46% at the primary level. At the Upper Primary level

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<sup>1</sup> In West Bengal the primary cycle is four years (Grades 1 to 4) and the Upper Primary also four years (Grades 5 to 8). For the purposes of this report these divisions are used rather than the more usual division of Grades 1 to 5 (Primary) and Grades 6 to 8 (Upper Primary).

the reported GER is 74.37%, and the NER is 71.63%. Each year, before the commencement of the academic session, an intensive enrolment campaign with a focus on community mobilisation is undertaken. This drive is expected to further reduce the out of school population prior to the 2005/06 school year. The State, and a number of districts, have undertaken cohort studies, the report of which is due in March. This will provide a more accurate picture of drop out, progression and completion rates. Tentative results from the Bardhaman District study show drop out rates averaging 9% in class 1, 5% in class 2, 3% in class 3 and 0.5% in class 4, and repetition rates as 13%, 4%, 3% and 1% respectively.

2.2 The State has undertaken sample verification checks of DISE data. The mission examined child registers kept at a number of schools visited. These documents are now an important source of data for local planning and monitoring, and their reliability is dependent on the accuracy and regularity with which they are updated. Some variation in the discipline of maintaining and updating these registers was noted. The mission recommends that the State improves its vigilance of the Child Register process, carrying out thorough checks as part of routine monitoring and inspection, and providing training to improve reliability where necessary.

2.3 West Bengal continues to develop its alternative education system through a number of initiatives. At the primary level the main provision is through 16,049 *Shishu Shiksha Kendras* (SSK) which now cater for 12 lakh children. Of these 3,500 SSKs have their own building, and a further 3,000 are scheduled for upgrading in the current year, leaving 9,500 either requiring upgrading or closure if children can be accommodated in nearby formal schools. The latter option may require the State to relax its current policy of not opening new or expanding existing formal primary schools. These centres continue to play an important role in bringing hitherto unreached children into school. The Mission was informed that no further SSKs will now be opened, yet there remain some 3.25 lakh children out of school at the primary level. To bring these children into school existing SSKs and formal primary schools will have to be expanded if further overcrowding and raising of the PTR is to be avoided. Careful joint planning by concerned departments is clearly necessary. Past DPEP JRMs have drawn attention to the need to ensure that the education provided at these centres is put on a par with that offered in formal government primary schools, and the PAB has sanctioned expenditure for 5000 SSKs to be upgraded to schools, including the provision of infrastructure. SSKs are in effect providing regular primary schooling for Grades 1 to 4, and many have enrolments of 100+ with needs for expanded infrastructure and deployment of more *sahayikas* (para teachers) so that they fall within the norms prescribed by SSA. The mission saw examples of extremely overcrowded and understaffed SSKs.

2.4 SSKs come under the Panchayat and Rural Development Department (P&RDD) and 3000 SSKs have been earmarked for physical upgrading in this financial year. So far plans have been submitted for 2400 and are being considered by P&RDD. Funding of three lakh is required: two from SSA funds and one (in cash or kind) from the community. Progress is so far slow, and greater priority needs to be afforded to this component. The mission saw the building plans developed by P&RD for upgrading SSKs (developed with technical support from UNICEF) and was impressed by the attractiveness and child-friendliness of the designs.

2.5 As primary enrolment pushes towards the 100% mark, there is inevitably an increased demand for schooling at the subsequent Upper Primary level. A similar alternative model of *Madhyamik Shiksha Karmasuchi* (MSK) is emerging to provide immediate response to this demand. Presently there are some 1101 MSKs serving 80,714 learners. There are plans to ensure at least one MSK in each of West Bengal's 3300 Gram Panchayats, and 2,122 have been sanctioned in the AWPB for 2004/05, along with 6,366 MSK teachers.

2.6 Given the important role both SSKs and MSKs play in providing education to the more disadvantaged communities of the State the Mission reiterates the recommendation of the Secretary (EE&L) in the minutes of the 52<sup>nd</sup> PAB meeting (2<sup>nd</sup> June 2004) that funds be ear-marked for SSK and MSK development and released to P&RDD as a priority. In the current year the sum of of Rs 43 crore has been released to P&RDD, of which only 22% (Rs 9.58 crore) was for physical works.

2.7 In addition to SSKs and MSKs the State has developed a number of other strategies to bring hitherto unenrolled and drop-out children into school. Deprived urban children are served by *Shishu Shiksha Prakalpa* (SSP) with current enrolment of 49,000. In Kolkata 395 NGO-run *Shishu Prakalpa* (SLP) centres, initiated under DPEP, enrol 23,000 children. Additionally some 903 *Ribindra Mukta Vidyalaya* (open learning centres) have been sanctioned. The State has initiated a programme of Bridge Courses to prepare drop-out or never enrolled children for re-entry into mainstream primary school. To date some 1,659 such courses have reached 41,000 children. The courses are run in a number of locations, including additional or spare rooms in primary schools. Bridge Course Instructors are recruited on contract through open competition and provided with an initial five day training in the use of prepared course materials. The objective of all bridge courses is to prepare children for mainstream schooling, either at a formal school, SSK or MSK. Tracking the progress of those who graduate from these courses is important in not only calculating remaining out of school children, but also in determining the efficacy of such programmes. The mission recommends that a tracking survey is undertaken. In addition the SSA PAB has recently sanctioned the opening of 53 *Kāsturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas* (KGBV) to be run by NGOs with capacity to provide residential schooling for up to 5,300 girls from Class 1 to 8 with a special focus on the Upper Primary level.

2.8 Whilst the mission commends the efforts that are being made to reach all children through these varied alternative arrangements, the diversity raises two important issues. Firstly is the issue of equity, and the mission noted very significant differences in terms of the quality of input between different arrangements, and saw many instances of alternative schooling failing to measure up to any basic concept of a minimum provision due largely to overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and paucity of learning materials. Secondly, consideration needs to be given before establishing an alternative centre as to whether the approach is in fact the best solution. The mission saw two examples where identical bridge courses were running in adjacent rooms, and where an afternoon SSP was being run in an unsuitable single room within the vicinity of a primary school where the day session had finished. In both cases more efficient use of resources would be possible with better, more convergent planning.

2.9 The Civil Works component of SSA has generally made slow progress. To date some 123 New School Buildings have been completed, with 219 in progress, to replace dilapidated or temporary structures, out of a total target of 371. A further 3747 Additional Classrooms have been built at existing schools, with a further 5871 in progress, out of a total target of 11,804. The mission was able to see a sample of these works in Purba Medinipur and Bardhaman Districts, with the following observations. A practice was noted of stretching the funding made available for the provision of one room to create three rooms with the consequence that the resulting structure was unfinished and of very poor quality, raising amongst other things an issues of safety. Iron reinforcing rods remained exposed (some at head height), floors were uneven, walls remained unplastered and doors and windows not properly fitted. Clear standards of construction need to be consistently applied, and guidance given to VECs to ensure these are adhered to.

2.10 The mission also noted a number of instances where building works had been undertaken at schools under the additional classroom allocation where there was not a perceived need to relieve overcrowding or reduce combined classes. In some cases the grant had not provided an additional classroom but some other structure. In a number of instances the additional classroom grant had been combined with community resources to complete a building project, on occasion at schools that seem already well resourced. Very clear guidelines need to be enforced regarding the purpose of the grant, and greater attention given to which schools receive support.

2.11 Many upper primary sections are contained within High Schools that cater for children from Grade 5 to 10, or 12 in some cases. The mission noted one instance where the allocation for an additional classroom to a High School had been added to funds raised by the community to provide for a large school hall, able to accommodate the full enrolment of 1800 students. The beneficiaries of this input clearly extend beyond the upper primary years intended under SSA, and raises questions over how priorities are being established and resource allocations made at District level. Desirable as school assembly halls may be, this provision does not fall within the core objectives of SSA. Notwithstanding these exceptions, the buildings seen by the mission were generally of good design and quality.

2.12 Under SSA 950 composite drinking water and toilet facilities have been provided, with a further 1220 in progress, out of a total target of 2,864. In addition to the provision under SSA, other schemes are assisting with improving the water and sanitation of schools, most notably the Total Sanitation Campaign run through the other department, such as the Public Health Department. Purba Medinipur claims that over 90% of schools are now covered, but attention still needs to be paid to the adequacy of provision with regards to school enrolment: the mission saw one school where a single toilet served a school of 85 children. In addition consideration needs to be given equally to SSKs (no toilet in two visited).

2.13 In summary, the mission identifies the following as priorities with regard to the first objective:

- ❑ Undertake independent data verification checks and improve scrutiny of VERs
- ❑ Establish closer parity of basic infrastructure provision between alternative education centres and formal schools

- Ensure civil works are directed more closely to achievement of this parity
- Focus attention at the upper primary level
- Continue to develop appropriate and innovative strategies for tackling remaining out of school children
- Undertake a tracking survey for bridge course graduates.

Objective 2 : Reduce gender, social and disability gaps

2.14 The DISE data (2003/04) show that girls constitute 49.52% of the enrolment at the primary level, in the range of 47.7% (Puruliya) to 50.7% (Kolkata). This shows an annual overall increase of 0.11%. This is reasonably consistent with the Seventh All India Education Survey which shows girls participation as 49.08% with a marginal (0.13%) difference in favour of rural over urban girls. At the upper primary level DISE data show girls participation as 48.23%, up from 47.52% from 2002-03. The All India Survey shows participation at 46.74%, with urban girls participation 1.5% higher than for rural girls. Disaggregated DISE data for SC show girls representing 49.18% of total SC enrolment at primary, and 45.19% at upper primary. Similarly the data for ST show 48.14% at primary and 41.59% at upper primary. Within this broad positive picture of closing gender and social gaps are pockets of remaining concern that point to priority areas for further effort and investment. Clearly further attention needs to focus on the upper primary level, particularly in districts where rates fall well below the state average. One would expect to see in future District AWPBs emphasis being paid to SC girls at the upper primary level in Bankura and Puruliya in particular, and in ten districts highlighted in the NPEGEL report presented to the mission with regards to ST girls at the Upper Primary level.

2.15 The mission met with members of the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education which administers the States 508 recognised Madrasahs in which are enrolled some four lakh students. (There are, in addition, an estimated 2,000 unrecognised Madrasahs). SSA supports additional teachers, transferring funds directly to the Board. In addition SSA grants for books and TLM, as well as the school grant are extended to Madrasahs through the SSA District Offices. Toilet and drinking water facilities and additional classrooms have been provided, though details were not available. The Board runs its own training programmes for teachers, through which it has been able to introduce the formal curriculum alongside the special emphasis associated with Madrasah education, which the Board's Chairman described this as "modernising".

2.16 The State is developing its NPEGEL programme and has undertaken a baseline study into the status of girls participation in focus blocks and identified key reasons why girls fail to enrol and attend schools. Findings are consistent with commonly known constraints, and point largely to economic pressures that involve girls in sibling care, domestic work and other paid employment. The study offers district specific data that should now form the basis of targeted interventions utilising the innovation funds available under SSA. The mission feels that there is a need to develop more creative strategies and incentives to improve participation, focusing more on addressing the demand side constraints through examining options for crèches and small scholarships to facilitate enrolment amongst the poorest. The experiences of neighbouring Bangladesh may offer examples of innovative schemes



in this regard. Discussions at state and district levels indicate that present activities focus almost exclusively on community awareness and sensitisation activities without addressing more directly the underlying causes of poor participation.

2.17 On the supply side the SSA programme provides a number of incentives to promote the participation of girls and socially disadvantaged groups. One major input is the provision of free text books to all girls as well as all ST, SC and OBC children, regardless of gender. The mission urges the State to examine current practice with regard to the supply of text books at the upper primary level and make better use of the provision available under SSA. The current practice is to provide a standard grant of Rs 10,000 per school for developing a Text Book Bank. Evidence gleaned by the mission was that this approach fails to sufficiently target the intended group, illustrated by this example from one junior high school where enrolment data show a total of 184 potential beneficiaries in the upper primary section (134 girls, and 50 ST/SC boys). The book register showed 13 children having received free textbooks from the grant, three of which were girls. According to the norm of Rs150 per child, the allocation available is Rs.27,600; clearly the Rs. 10,000 grant is inadequate. This inadequacy is made worse by failing to target the provision to the intended beneficiaries, contrary to the State report claiming that the Text Book Bank will provide free textbooks to all SC/ST/Minority and girl children.

2.18 The State has identified 92,290 Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in 192 (out of 341) Blocks and 43 (out of 127) Municipalities. Of these, 50,677 are enrolled in schools, leaving 44% out of school. A total of 11,806 aids and appliances have been provided, and 2932 ramps and handrails provided in schools. The mission urges further effort to enrol the remaining children, and to extend coverage to remaining areas. The mission also notes the development of resource persons to provide the necessary support to teachers in providing appropriate education to these children. The mission would urge the state to reassess the number of CWSN as the reported number represents around 1% of the school aged population (pro rated for current coverage) against an estimated norm of 3%. In all of the schools visited by the mission no CWSN were observed.

2.19 In summary, the mission identifies the following as priorities with regard to the second objective:

- Increase focus on geographical areas based on NPEGEL survey, with SC/ST girls at Upper Primary level a priority and develop innovative approaches and incentives to enrol the hardest to reach girls
- Ensure effective targeting of textbook provision using norms of SSA
- Reassess CWSN and extend coverage to all Blocks and Municipalities

*Objective 3: Enhance quality to improve transition and learning*

2.20 There was no recruitment of primary or upper primary teachers during 2002-03 and 2003-04. During 2004-05 2568 teachers have been engaged as additional para teachers in primary schools, and 8407 similarly in upper primary sections. A further 4011 and 8808 have been selected and allocated (empanelled) for primary and upper primary schools respectively, but court orders continue to prevent their taking up their

allocated posts. Whilst this is some small progress, it has to be seen against a backlog of 63,000 sanctioned posts where recruitment thus far constitutes 17% of the requirement. The impact of the lack of teachers cannot be overstated: it imposes huge constraints on schools that have to struggle with high Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTR) which are presently 51:1 for Primary and 88:1 at Upper Primary. More worrying is the fact that whereas PTRs at primary have fallen significantly from 62:1 in 2001/02, the PTR at Upper Primary has risen from 79:1 to 88:1 between 2002/03 and 2003/04<sup>2</sup>. The implications for this upon learning are obvious, and the gains made in enrolment and the benefits available through SSA are being negated by the persistence of this situation. The State urgently needs to find a way through this impasse so it can move to the target norm of a PTR of 40:1.

2.21 P&RDD employs some 41,544 *Sahayikas* in the 16,049 SSKs throughout the state. Whereas female representation in this cadre is good, with women forming over 80% of new recruits. However the overall percentage of female teachers in formal schools is low: 24.3% at the primary level and 27.2% at the upper primary level. The State should endeavour to attract and recruit more women as formal teachers as per the target of 50% of new recruits.

2.22 The various grants provided to schools under SSA are intended to improve learning and teaching quality, and the norms are clear as to eligibility and use. The mission wishes to draw to the attention of state and district authorities a number of deviations from these norms and the principles underpinning them. Firstly, use of the grants should be openly displayed at each school. No example was found of this practice. Many schools were not receiving their full allocation of teacher grants.

2.23 The state has yet to initiate a 20 day programme of Teacher Training, though the mission was informed that a decision has recently been taken to introduce this from next academic year. Presently the provision is for 10 days initial training is being undertaken linked to the new Primary Curriculum developed by the WBBPE. This has so far covered around 40% of teachers. To supplement this, 10 days of in-school on-the-job training provided through cluster level resource persons is being proposed. Whilst in theory this approach seems sensible, the reality is the state currently does not have the human resource in place to deliver it, currently only 1092 of the proposed 4,212 Cluster Resource Teachers are in place. Even if all Cluster RTs were in place, with each covering on approximately forty teachers from ten schools, the requirement would be for 400 days per year. There is an urgent need to develop a clear and workable plan for teacher education, as recommended in the PAB meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2004. The start made by SCERT in drafting "A Perspective Plan on Teacher Education" is a positive move, and this needs to be quickly developed and implemented if the quality of what goes on in classrooms is to be improved.

2.24 The training of *sahayikas* is undertaken by the SSK mission under P&RDD and consists of a seven day induction followed by a further seven days in service training. This training and school level support is provided by academic supervisors.

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<sup>2</sup> The structure of the education system in West Bengal makes exact calculation of the PTR at the upper primary level difficult. There are 11,440 upper primary only schools (class 5 to 8) which have PTRs of 88:1. These schools cover 6.4 million (or 76%) of total upper primary enrolment. Two other types of government schools include remaining Grade 6 to 8 enrolment. Junior High Schools covering up to Class 10 (PTR 24:1) and Senior High Schools covering up to Class 11 (PTR 9:1)

Field visits confirmed that both training and supervision was being carried out, but often not to the full extent stated. There would seem to be greater opportunity for collaboration and integration of the separate schemes that train and support teachers of SSKs and formal schools, and there is clearly an imbalance of support in favour of teachers in formal schools. This becomes even more stark when other comparisons are drawn between the two systems in terms of facilities, as well as terms and conditions of service. Whilst the need at the primary level is great, the need at the upper primary may be even greater, and the present provision of three days training covering 35% of teachers is inadequate.

2.25 A key intervention for raising standards of learning in primary schools is the Integrated Learning Improvement Programme (ILIP). Developing from a pilot programme under DPEP in 2000-01, the developed version of the programme now covers 3852 primary schools in all districts. Evaluations in 2003-4 showed improvements in attendance and learning amongst children in participating schools. The mission noted a qualitative contrast between ILIP schools visited and others, and recommends that the scheme, or variants of it where appropriate, is extended further as present coverage is restricted to less than 8% of schools.

2.26 Following support from NCERT in December 2004 the state is examining the case for Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE). CCE of children's performance has been in place in West Bengal since 1981 through the *Mulyan Panji* system of periodic evaluation. CCE is seen in the state in terms of testing at sub-unit, unit and terminal assessment.

Every child is formally tested in Bengali, English and Maths three times a year and assigned a grade ranging from A to F recorded in a register. Annual summary information is reported to the District. The results are evidently used to identify children who require remedial support which is offered through extra classes out of school hours and through the provision of an additional workbook, providing the child with the opportunity to go over missed ground. Field visits were unable to gauge the extent to which these systems were actually in operation. In addition the WBBPE undertakes an annual assessment of all Class 2 and 4 children. The results of this exercise do not seem well publicised or used, and clearly much more could be made of this information in planning.

2.27 In summary, the mission identifies the following as priorities with regard to the third objective:

- Recruit more teachers to reduce the PTR to SSA norm of 40:1
- Develop a coherent and comprehensive plan for teacher education covering all types of teachers
- Strengthen the school inspection, supervision and support system
- Ensure grants are made available to schools and used for the purposes intended

### 3 Programme Implementation

3.1 Implementation of SSA has been slow in terms of expenditure against PAB approval. Over the first three years releases from GoI and GoWB amounts to Rs. 290.03 crore and expenditure over these three years totalled Rs 253.70 crore, equal to

87.5% of funds released. Annual spillover of unspent funds is high, which may be explained by the receipt of funds coming late in the financial year. In the current year (2004/05) against the approved amount of Rs. 824.97 crore a total of Rs. 422.95 crore has been released by GoI and State (51% of the approved amount), including the unutilised spillover of Rs.16.47 crore. The PAB approval was dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2004 with GoI funds totalling Rs. 304.86 crore received by the State on 27<sup>th</sup> August due to delays in reconciliation of data and State compliance with legal requirements related to bonds. The State share was added on 30<sup>th</sup> December. Against this the State has released to Districts all but 2% of the funds, though the lateness of the availability of all funds means that utilisation has been very poor. The lags at various stages of the system, including at the sub-district level where transfers are reported as taking up to eight weeks is clearly slowing progress. As a result of the above all aspects of the programme have proceeded slower than anticipated, in particular the civil works programme has been affected with targets being only 30% completed in the current year. Other aspects of the programme have equally been adversely affected, and at the time of the mission no expenditure was showing against a number of sub-heads, including core components such as textbook provision, girls education, innovation and various grants to schools. District visits show that funds are being received and transferred, though reports of utilisation remain pending. The roll out of the manual on Financial Management and Procurement currently in hand. This may help smooth the current situation, though initial feedback from the State is that much support will be needed at all levels to ensure it is effectively used. This should be a priority action for the State, and the option of contracting an experienced agency to design and deliver this should be considered.

3.2 A way needs to be found to ensure smoother flow of funds that will generate increased levels of expenditure by the State. The mission recommends that the preparation of AWPBs is undertaken earlier and submitted to GoI in such time to allow resources to reach the State earlier in the financial year. Similarly GoWB needs to speed up the process of returning Utilisation Certificates to allow for the timely release of further instalments.

3.3 GoWB has made available its 25% share, though there has been a lag of between three and four months after the receipt of the central share, further complicating the fund flow situation. Budget figures for the years 1999-2000 through to 2004-05 show that GoWB is maintaining overall expenditures to the sub sector at or above 1990-2000 levels, there being an 11% increase in total expenditure (Plan and Non plan) in 2003-4 expenditure over that of 1999-00

3.4 In summary, the mission identifies the following as priorities with regard to programme implementation.

- Address bottlenecks in fund flow and implementation capacity
- Roll out the Manual on Financial Management and Procurement through sound training programmes

#### **4 Institutional arrangements and capacity building**

4.1 Previous DPEP JRM's have recognised the strong three-tier Panchayat system in West Bengal which is ideally placed to support the decentralised approach to

educational reform and development envisaged by SSA. The mission was impressed at the degree of collaboration between SSA and local bodies, with the Chairman of the Primary School Council taking a prominent role in the Districts visited and working closely with the District Project Director and other key functionaries. At the Block level the Block Development Officer is clearly a key figure in the programme where SSA is rightly seen as one of a number of initiatives that contribute to improved services. The BDO is thus a key figure in overall planning and implementation, and is able to draw together the various programmes in a coherent way that avoids overlap and duplication of effort. A good example of this is found in the extensive Total Sanitation Programme which provides significant resources to schools and where judicious coordination with SSA is required.

4.2 At the lowest level annual planning involves updating the VER (in May) and subsequent discussion at village level of needs. Discussions at this level indicated suggest that more needs to be done to build capacity for school mapping and habitation based planning, and that the planning exercise is undertaken at higher levels based and could be more systematic in terms of response to need and subsequent allocation of resources. Clear examples of persisting inequalities were seen and where first call on resources were not seemingly based on order of need.

4.3 Notwithstanding the above, the mission felt strongly that there is opportunity to build on existing systems centring around District Quality Monitoring Teams (DQMT) that have been established, to further strengthen the monitoring, supervision and support at district, Circle and Cluster level. Priority needs to be given to filling vacant Resource Teacher posts at CLRC and CRC levels, where presently only 482 out of a total of 1374 are in post at CLRC level, and (as previously stated) 1092 out of 4217 at CRC level. Discussions with staff at each level revealed a lack of cohesion between the various levels. West Bengal has yet to introduce Cluster Resource Centres from which training programmes are delivered and where school and teacher support systems are based. Cluster Coordinators are being recruited using retired teachers on an honorarium basis and are based at a centrally located Secondary School. There needs to be greater effort in ensuring that their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, particularly in terms of school monitoring and support. This will be enhanced if the Circle Level Coordinators (all of whom are Sub Inspectors of Schools with this additional charge) take a stronger role in planning their work, and their management and supervision. To improve the consistency of school monitoring the State has introduced a school supervision sheet. Whilst the initiative is commendable there is little scope within the pro-forma to record discussion and recommendations to be made to the school. The mission also noted some informal grading of schools was taking place. This is important in terms of not only identifying schools requiring greater attention, but also as a basis for setting improvement targets for schools.

4.4 The critical institution for ensuring school effectiveness is the Village Education and Health Committee (VEHC) for it is members of this body that are in day to day contact with the school and thus best placed to take the lead role in monitoring and supervision. The work of CRC Coordinators (and others who visit schools) needs to take account of this, so that supervision and support visits help set the VEHC agenda for school improvement. The focus needs to move away from one that is essentially counting (enrolment, out of school etc) towards one that is more

involved with what goes on inside the school. The mission noted a tendency in discussion with those involved in school supervision and support for reporting to be upwards and outwards with less emphasis on exploring ways with school managers or VEHC members ways in which the school might take immediate steps to improve.

4.5 The state is now planning to open DIETS (from upgraded PTTIs) though as yet none are functional. There is an opportunity to learn from experiences elsewhere given the varied experience of DIETS across the country. A prerequisite will be to provide quality staff, be clear on roles and responsibilities and ensure the DIET is resourced to serve the needs of SSA. There is clearly a need at district level to improve the training and support functions, and for this resource to tie in with the existing structures at District level through effective collaboration with District Coordinators and Support staff in focal areas; at CLRC level through augmentation of the work of the CLR Coordinator and at Cluster level.

4.6 At the State level there are a number of institutions that play key roles in elementary education, notably the West Bengal Board of Primary Education, and the WB of secondary Education which covers Upper Primary level. Both Boards have an SSA cell which gives direction and support to the programme. The mission notes the resurgence of the SCERT and the developing plan to establish a SIEMAT, which will be co-located in new premises with the SCERT. Whilst communication and coordination appears to be good, there is a need to ensure that all pull in the same direction and once the SIEMAT is firmly established their respective roles integrate with those of the Boards.

4.7 A number of Departments are involved in the delivery of SSA, principally School Education, P&RDD and the Municipal Corporations. Whilst the areas of responsibility are necessarily discrete, the overarching vision and goals of SSA are common. The mission formed the view that communication and coordination at the State level between School Education and P&RD whilst improved still remain weak, particularly at critical stages of planning and preparation of the AWPB.

4.8 The delivery of SSA relies very heavily on staff recruited on contract who are paid varying honoraria as well as on Government employees given additional charge. There is a heavy reliance on retired education personnel. The mission recognises the liability aspect of increasing the number of government employees and the difficulties presently being experienced. However the reliance on contract staff needs to be carefully managed to ensure appropriate skills are available. Retired teachers have doubtless valuable experience but may not be well prepared for dealing with the demands of SSA. Whilst orientation training is provided the mission gets a sense that thereafter many are left to devise their own working patterns and approaches. On going support, combining short training events as well as mentoring and sound management will ensure these staff remain clearly focussed on the objectives of the programme. Where Government employees are given additional charge there are obvious problems of balancing not only competing priorities, but also divergent approaches. The weakness can be a strength, in that frequently programmes take on a life of their own and fail to make lasting institutional impact. The approach in West Bengal offers the opportunity of infusing new ideas and approaches into the mainstream and ensuring that structures and practices initiated under SSA are durable. The whole system of school level inspection, supervision and support is one notable

area. The Principal Secretary is keen to establish a new framework in this area and upgrade the skills of staff: this should be taken forward as priority as it will have potentially significant impact on the quality agenda of SSA.

4.9 This report has already stressed the need to significantly strengthen the monitoring process at village and cluster level. There is also a need to strengthen the monitoring at State level. Achievement of objectives will be better achieved if there is a shift in emphasis away from activity and input monitoring to one that examines progress towards outcomes. The mission was unable to interact with the assigned monitoring institutions, though the report was made available on the final day. This independent monitoring function is critical to ensuring adequate vigilance is maintained over the programme and should be required and welcomed by all project functionaries as giving them the indicators that the programme is being optimally delivered. Impact assessment of SSA cannot and should not rely solely on the rapid appraisals of JRMs, and the presence of a clearly defined, focussed and well executed formative monitoring system through an independent and experienced institution will add great value in providing timely and relevant information to programme managers to improve overall effectiveness. It will also provide the basis to improve the relevance and effectiveness of JRMs.

4.10 In summary, the mission identifies the following as priorities with regard to institutional arrangements and capacity building:

- Improve coordination between School Education Department and P&RDD
- Fill up vacant CLRC and CRC positions
- Strengthen monitoring and supervision at village and cluster levels, ensuring school level monitoring combines the support function
- Strengthen the independent State level monitoring system

#### **Main recommendations**

From the numerous recommendations given throughout this report, the Mission identifies the following as being of utmost priority:

- Ensure all schools and other key posts, especially CLRC and CRC, are adequately staffed. The recruitment of teachers should be given topmost priority.
- Ensure that resources available through SSA are used for maximum impact on the objectives of the programme. In particular school level grants and infrastructure need to be better targeted.
- Overall programme implementation should be speeded up so that expenditure increases. Improved planning, resource allocation and more results-oriented management will assist this. In particular the civil works programme needs to accelerate.
- Develop further the focus on quality in schools and strengthen the training and school based monitoring and support mechanisms to this end, particularly at CLRC and CRC level.