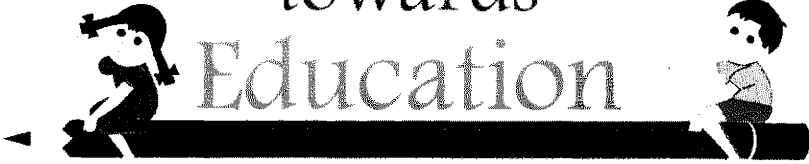




India's Stride  
towards  
Education  
for All



Update to the National Plan of Action  
INDIA

2007  
Department of Elementary Education and Literacy  
Ministry of Human Resource Development  
Government of India  
New Delhi

D.12208

Published on behalf of Department of Elementary Education and Literacy,  
Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India



Atal Bihari Vajpayee  
Prime Minister

## Message

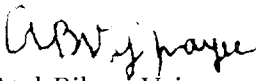
The development and well-being of any nation are directly linked to the level of education among its people. It was with this recognition that the world community adopted the six goals of the Dakar Framework in 2000, thus setting the global agenda for Education for All (EFA).

During the last decade, India has made significant strides towards the goals of EFA, focusing on the various components of literacy and childcare. For the first time since Independence, the absolute number of illiterates has come down, despite an overall increase in population. Most importantly, the growth of female literacy has been at a faster rate than male literacy, thus resulting in the narrowing of the gender gap.

The Government of India is fully committed to the goals of the Dakar Framework, and has set in motion several measures to ensure that we achieve these, in certain cases well before the EFA deadline of 2015. With the recent amendment of the Constitution to provide free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 to 14 years, we have pledged ourselves to universal elementary education in no uncertain terms.

Literacy, said Mahatma Gandhi, is not the end of education, not even the beginning. It is but the first step in the process of our development as human beings, and the task of ensuring education for all is one of the prime challenges of nation building. History will judge us by our successes or failures in this area, and I look forward to the day when we will have achieved our goal of Education for All.

New Delhi  
November 7, 2003

  
Atal Bihari Vajpayee  
Prime Minister



Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi  
Minister of Human Resource Development

## Preface

India is a country of sub-continental dimensions with 16% of the world's population. The task of providing basic education to its 192 million children in the 6-14 age group has been a challenging one. The variations from region to region, from the coastal belts to the Himalayan highlands and riverine tracts to desert lands; with diverse languages and dialects and manifold social/cultural diversities, has made the task of providing mass education even more daunting. Fifty years ago, only 24 girls out of 100 went to school. Now this figure has risen to 86. In the overall scenario, 82 children out of 100 are in schools in the 6-14 age cohort. India is accelerating the pace of educational development so that all her children in the 6-14 age group receive elementary education by 2010.

India has made it a Fundamental Right to provide free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14. We have embarked on the commitment to universal elementary education through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which covers all 192 million children, 800,000 schools, 3.3 million teachers in well over 1.1 million habitations across the 600 districts of the country. SSA has a target-based approach in which all children would complete 5 years of primary education by 2003 and 8 years of elementary education by 2010. Most importantly, the SSA focuses on bridging the gender and social category gaps in the primary stage by 2007 and in elementary stage by 2010. The SSA is a partnership between the Central and the State Governments to meet the demand for quality basic education all over the country.

The Government of India thus stands fully committed to the goals of the Dakar Framework and has demonstrated the political will and purposeful resolve in





providing a coherent, relevant, rights-based approach to UEE. The requisite measures to translate this fundamental right into reality have been set in motion. Under the SSA in the past two years, approvals for opening of 90,000 new schools, 55,000 school buildings, 85,000 additional classrooms, 11.3 million toilets, 65,000 drinking water facilities, distribution of 17 million free textbooks and the appointment of 450,000 teachers have been made. This should be seen against only 77,000 schools opened in the decade from 1991-2001. The SSA in its third year now, has gathered an unshakable momentum and grassroot penetration to accelerate the rate of change in the march towards UEE.

Apart from tackling the issue of infrastructure and access, SSA is also addressing larger systematic issues which include building partnerships with the community, local elected bodies, women's groups and other community-based structures for instituting a more participatory school management style and to establish the bedrock of local accountability. The programme deliberately introduces flexibility in the approach to schooling, by providing bridge courses and alternative schooling facilities through the Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative & Innovative Education (EGS&AIE) programmes, for children who cannot fit into the formal school system. SSA has also actively created space for effective public-private partnerships in which synergy between the governmental and non-governmental sectors, and now even the corporate sector, is being enabled to work together to fulfil the national resolve of UEE.


The challenge of UEE in India is mainly to bring all girls to school. The SSA adopts a two-fold strategy to ensure this. One is to create an enabling environment for girls by creating a demand for girls education and the other, to make the education system more responsive to the needs of girls so that they stay on in school at least till the end of the elementary education cycle and learn better. SSA works closely in motivating the community and parents for supporting girls education through advocacy and environment building programmes, through close linkages with women's groups, bringing parents and the schools closer, allocating more female teachers and by creating girl friendly classrooms through revised curricula, gender-positive textual materials, gender sensitization of teachers and education administrators, as well as supportive measures for early childhood education and flexible schooling options for girls at the 10+ stage.

Synergy with the programmes that have a direct spin-off in improving the status of girls participation in education, such as through the women's collectives in the Mahila Samakhya, a programme for the empowerment of women through education, is also being tapped. Convergence with the nationwide Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme has dovetailed the provision of crèches and early childhood education facilities with primary schools in India, freeing girls from the tedium of sibling care. The Directive Principles of State policy in the Constitution have been amended to include provision of early childhood education and care.

We have now introduced more options in the educational process, particularly for older girls who have dropped out or were never enrolled, as well as those who are still unreached in the remote and scattered parts of the country. Targeting 2656 of the most educationally backward blocks of the country, where the female literacy rate is below the national average (54.28%) and where the gender gap is above the national average (21.68%), as also those areas where the female literacy of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities is less than 10% but where their population is above 5% of the total, the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) is providing region specific strategies to enable girls to come to schools, bridge courses and school camps. Seven hundred and fifty residential schools for girls are also on the anvil.

The educational and literacy data of recent years demonstrably shows an accelerated pace towards the achievement of EFA goals. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for elementary level in 1950-51 was 32.1% which has increased to 82.35% in the year 2001-02. More notably the GER for the primary level has risen to 92.97% in 2002. A look at absolute numbers shows that the total enrolment at the elementary stage increased from 157 million in 2000 to 166 million in 2002 (EMIS September, 2002). This increase is most evident in the case of girls where it rose from 68 million to 77 million. Thus, the major proportion of the increase in enrolment is due to increased enrolment of girls. In this computerized data base of school statistics under SSA, the number of girls for every 100 boys in schools in 2002 has gone up to 89 in primary and 80 in upper primary from a figure of 78 and 69 respectively in the year 2000. The GER has increased dramatically in the primary section for boys from 104.9 in 2000 to 111 in 2002 and for girls from 85.9 in 2000 to 104 in 2002.





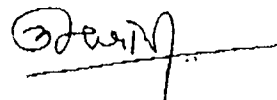
Equally significant has been the decrease in the out-of-school population in the country. From the figure of 35 million in the year 2000, the figure has come down to 23 million in the beginning of the year 2003. Since then, SSA has rolled out a very strong programme for the year 2003-04 to enrol around 12 million children in Education Guarantee Centre and Alternative & Innovative Education (EGS&AIE) programme, while the remaining of out-of-school children will be absorbed in the regular schools system with concerted enrolment drives. The formal school system has been shored up with the appointment of more than 400,000 school teachers and the construction of 180,000 classrooms in existing schools, to accommodate and teach the enhanced numbers. The dropout rate too has fallen. For boys the dropout rate fell from 62% in 1961 to 40% in 2001-02, while for the same period the dropout rate for girls came down from 71% to 41%. Similar decline is evinced in the case of SC/ST girls. Thus here too, gender disparities are declining.

The National Literacy Mission continues to advance from strength in strength in spreading basic literacy among adults in the 15-35 age group. The decadal Census in 2001 shows that total literacy in India has risen from 52.21% to 65.38%, showing significant progress. Female literacy has increased from 39.29% to 54.16%, an increase of 14.8%. Out of 858 million people in the 7+ age group, 562 million are now literate, of which 225 million are women. Three-fourths of the male population and more than half of the female population are now literate. These achievements become even more noteworthy when one considers that for the first time since independence, India's absolute number of illiterates has reduced despite corresponding growth in the country's population. Of equal significance is the fact that the female literacy rate has increased faster than the male literacy rate, resulting in narrowing of the gender gap from 24.85% in 1991 to 21.68% in 2001.

We are now targeting 45 districts in the country where the level of female literacy is below 30% by initiating special interventions through strong participation of NGOs and the local community in an effort to increase participation of women in the literacy programmes. In addition the Continuing Education Programme and the Jan Shikshan Sansthan are providing multifaceted adult education programmes to the educationally disadvantaged groups, the neo-literates and semi-literates by improving their vocational skills and equipping them for gainful employment.

The impact of India's efforts to eradicate illiteracy during the last decade have borne fruits and the established trends clearly indicate that by 2010-11 the overall literacy rate should reach 80%.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for universalising of elementary education and the National Literacy Mission in India are together making a rapid improvement in reducing the gender gap in literacy as well as in participation of children at the elementary level. While the SSA is bringing more and more girls in the 6-14 age group into the fold of education, the literacy campaigns are creating the environment for womens' and girls education, while at the same time bringing more adult women into the fold of literacy. India is poised to achieve the EFA goals of Universal Elementary Education and adult literacy by 2010.



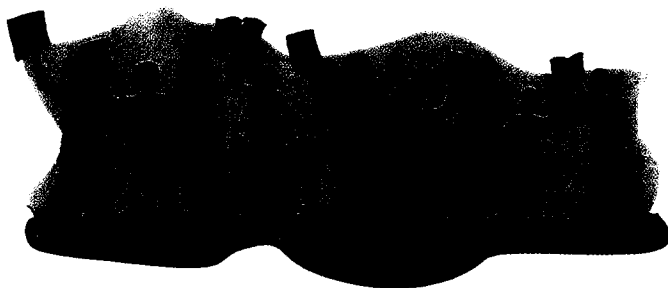
Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi



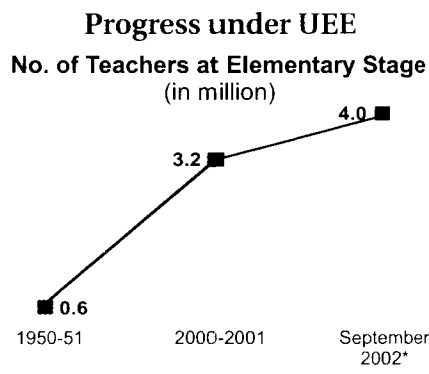
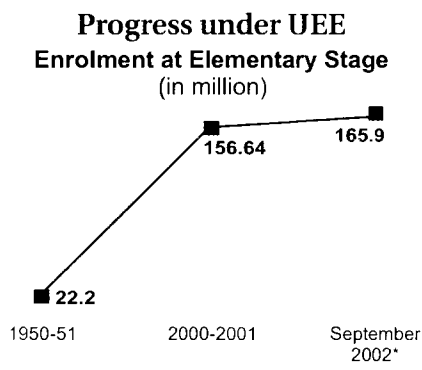


## Achievements towards UEE

Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) has been a national goal since Independence. It has received a fillip with the recent enactment of the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act 2002 in December 2002. Now free and compulsory education to all children in the 6-14 years age group is a Fundamental Right and is being implemented through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the national flagship programme for the universalisation of elementary education.



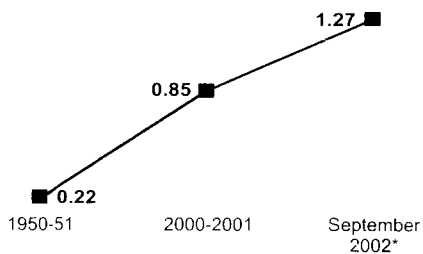
Over the past five decades, concerted efforts towards the goals of UEE have resulted in a manifold increase in the number of schools, teachers



\* EMIS data for 459 districts only, projected for 600 districts to arrive at All India figure

and students. The recent initiatives indicate that India is well poised to achieve the goals of Education for All. The latest data collected by the Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS) in September 2002 reveal the progress made over the baseline year of 1950-51 and in 2000-01 when the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched.

**Progress under UEE**  
**No. of Schools** (in million)  
(Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary)



\* EMIS data for 459 districts only. projected for 600 districts to arrive at All India figure



## Progress under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

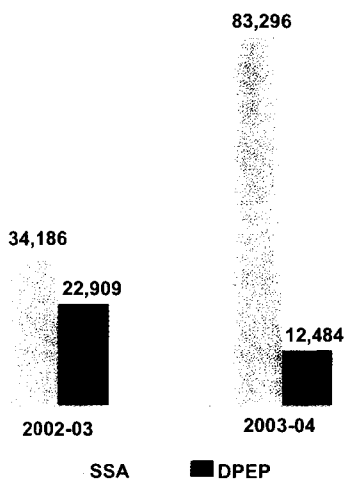
The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), formulated by the Government of India is a nation-wide programme with an unprecedented outreach and comprehensiveness to universalise elementary education through community-ownership of the school system. The SSA, a national programme to fulfil the fundamental right to free and compulsory education, is being implemented by the Government of



India in partnership with the state governments with a long-term perspective on cost sharing through a district-level decentralised management framework involving local bodies.

### Financial Outlay under SSA and DPEP

(Rs. in million)



Source: Elementary Education Bureau, Government of India

Implemented in a full-fledged manner in the year 2002-03, SSA is now in its third year of operation. In the last two years of its operation, a total outlay of Rs. 152,875 million was approved under the programme and the District Primary Education Programme, the component of SSA targeting primary education in select districts.

The SSA also addresses the issue of gender parity and eliminating the gender gap through special components aimed exclusively at the girl child. Under SSA the special incentives and provision to ensure enrolment and retention of the girl child include free textbooks, community mobilisation, and gender sensitisation of teachers.

---

**Targets under SSA and DPEP (2002 -2003)**

	<b>SSA</b>	<b>DPEP</b>	<b>Total</b>
New Schools	18,059	1,640	19,699
New Teachers	25,782	17,108	42,890
School Buildings	8,095	8,849	16,944
Additional Class Rooms	32,028	7,495	39,523
Toilets	39,699	11,130	50,829
Drinking Water	26,805	6,590	33,395
Free Text Books	3,11,39,754	1,40,86,909	4,52,26,663
Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) (number of children)	11,81,000	6,99,920	18,80,920

---

*Source: Elementary Education Bureau, Government of India*

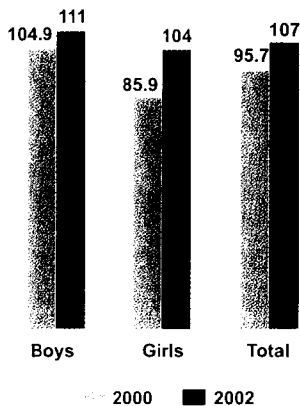


## Increasing Enrolment

The impact that the SSA and other elementary education programmes are having in changing the educational scenario in the country is borne out by the consistent increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). The total enrolment at the elementary stage increased from 157 million in 2000 to 166 million in 2002. This increase is sharper in the case of girls, rising from 68 million in 2000 to 77 million in 2002. The increase in GER at the primary level is even more dramatic, as indicated in the accompanying graph.



**Gross Enrolment Ratio at Primary Level (I-V)**



Source: EMIS, 2002

The increase in enrolment is matched by the corresponding decrease in the numbers of out-of-school children in the country. From a figure of 35 million in the year 2000, the out-of-school population decreased to 23 million in the beginning of 2003. The annual plans under SSA have provided for enrolment for all these children through alternate schooling programmes, notably the Education Guarantee Centres and Alternative & Innovative Educational Scheme (EGS&AIES).

The enrolment data for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other minorities are also heartening. Of all

children enrolled in primary classes, 21% were SCs and 13% STs.

SSA has also been successful in retaining children in schools as is evident by the falling drop out rates. The drop out rate for boys fell from 62% in 1961 to 40% in 2001-02, while the rate for girls came down even more sharply from 71% to 41% in the same period.

The increasing enrolment has also had an effect on the population of the out-of-school children in the country which decreased by 12 million, from 35 million in 2000 to 23 million at the beginning of 2003.

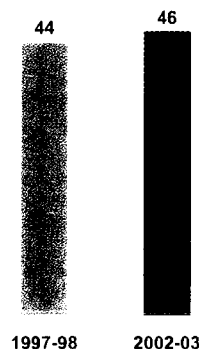
Recognising the role played by female teachers in improving the enrolment of girls, the government has stipulated that 50 per cent of the teachers being recruited in SSA would be women.

### **Mahila Samakhya: Empowering Women**

The Mahila Samakhya programme, implemented in 9,000 villages in 57 districts in 10 states, is being extended to 240 districts. The programme is based on an acceptance that the fundamental issues that influence women's education — low status, survival tasks and poverty — are essentially outside the domain of education, yet education may be the critical factor that could help women break out of their predicament.

The centrality of education in the struggle to achieve equality is an important focus of Mahila Samakhya. Educational inputs in the form of adult education, non-formal education, vocational training are introduced in a phased manner, responding to the needs and priorities expressed by women. An interesting outcome has been the emerging focus on girls and adolescents within the programme.

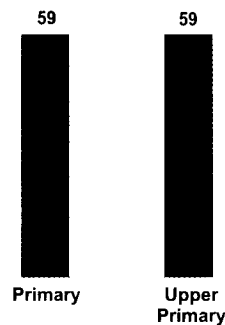
### **Percentage of SC/ST Girls Enrolled**



Source: EMIS, 2002

### **Female - Male Teacher Ratio in 2001-02**

(per 100 male teachers)



Source: Abstract of Selected Educational Statistics 2001-02

## Recent Initiatives for Girls

Though many girls are increasingly being enrolled, there are others who are unable to attend school due to varied socio-economic reasons.

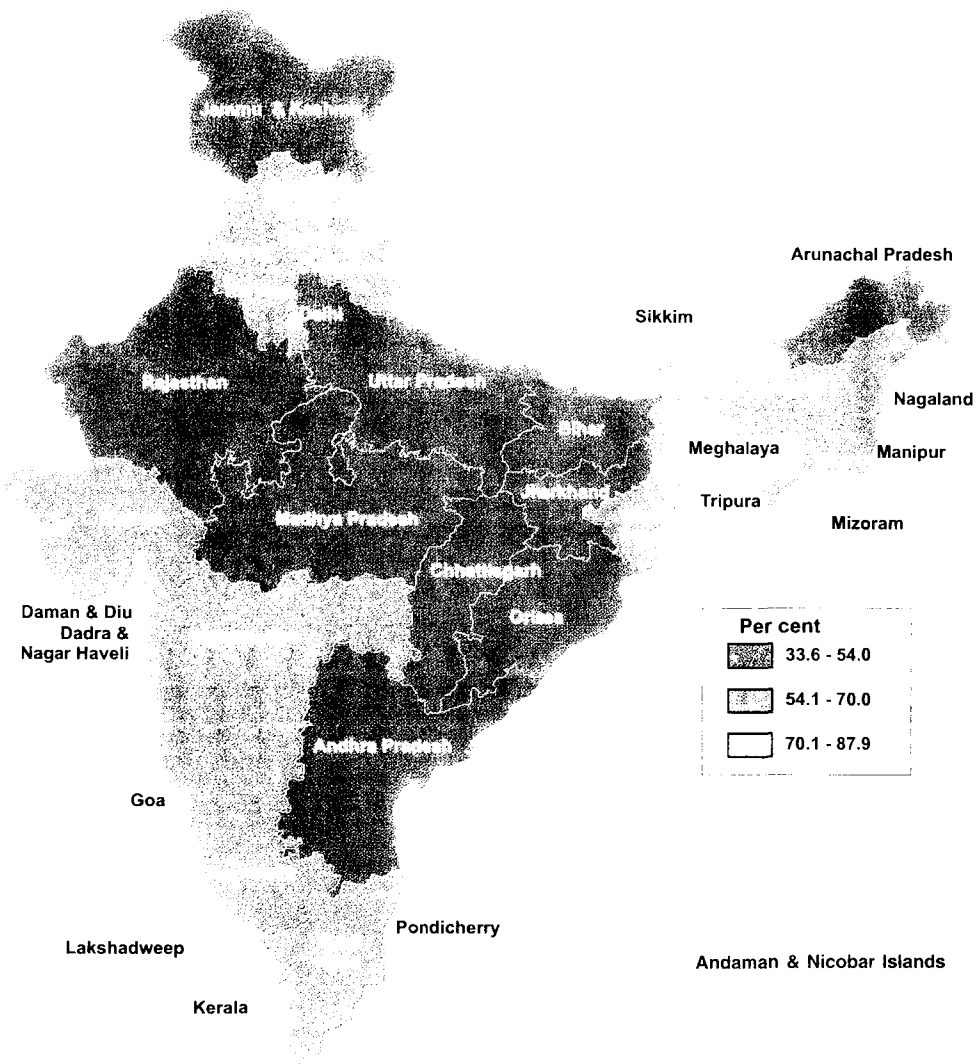
The education of girls has a multiplier effect yielding benefits not only for the present generation, but also for the future ones. Recognising this fact, SSA has adopted a two-

pronged strategy and initiated special schemes to ensure greater enrolment and retention of girls in elementary education. On the one hand, it creates a demand for girls' education by motivating community and parents through advocacy and mass campaigns. On the other hand, it builds an enabling environment and makes the education system more responsive and tuned to the needs of girls through gender-positive curriculum, sensitisation of teachers and administrators, as well as supportive measures for early childhood care and flexible schooling options.



### **National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level**

The NPEGEL is a specific programme targeting girls' education in the 2656 educationally backward blocks having a predominant Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) population, where the female literacy rate is lower, and the gender gap higher than the national average. The special interventions for girls under the programme include development of child-friendly schools at cluster level, remedial teaching, bridge courses and child care centres. Additional incentives in the form of uniforms, workbooks and stationery are also part of the package.



Map not to scale





## Residential Schools for Girls

To enable girls in remote and scattered habitations, who live at a distance from the nearest school, a special scheme that provides for residential schooling has been formulated. Nearly 750 such residential schools, catering mainly to girls belonging to SC, ST, other backward classes (OBC) and other minority groups, are proposed to be set up in a phased manner.

---

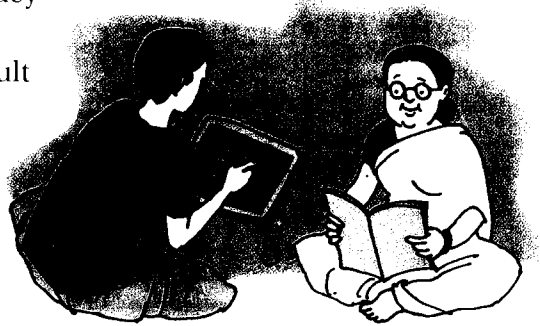
### Special Focus on Girls

- Free textbooks for girls
  - Toilets for girls
  - Funds under Innovative Activity for supportive early childhood care facilities
  - Fifty percent of the teachers to be female
  - Sensitization of Panchayati Raj Institutions and community
  - Development of gender-positive curriculum, teaching learning material
  - Gender sensitive planning and management of schools
  - Flexible systems to suit girls of different age groups through EGS and Alternative/ Innovative Scheme
  - Female representation in VECs/ PTAs
  - Residential camps and bridge courses for mainstreaming
- 

Thus, by adopting a two-pronged strategy to create demand for girls education as well as build an enabling environment through focussed, responsive and time-bound initiatives, India has succeeded in accelerating the pace of UEE driven by improved female representation and participation of girls in the education process.

## ■ National Literacy Mission: Achievements

Launched in 1988, the National Literacy Mission (NLM) has been striving to spread basic literacy amongst the adult illiterates in the 15-35 age group through the Total Literacy Campaign in nearly all the 600 districts of the country. In the recent past, attempts have been made to consolidate the gains of the literacy programme by focusing on critical areas, which are:



- Concerted efforts to improve female literacy, particularly in those areas where the levels are low;
- Organisation of residual illiteracy projects in areas with substantial number of illiterates;
- Achieving convergence with development programmes of other departments under the continuing education centres; and
- Training in skill development and income generation programmes by increasing the outreach of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan.

### **Continuing Education Programme**

The Continuing Education (CE) Programme provides a thrust to the NLM by linking literacy with skill upgradation and quality of life improvement. The programme provides an opportunity and flexibility to people to continue learning as per their needs and choices.





Continuing education includes all types of learning opportunities, ranging from quality of life improvement, income generation, equivalency

Trends in Literacy Rate				
Year	Persons	Male	Female	Gender Gap in literacy rate
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.330
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.884
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.770

Source: Census of India

programmes and individual interest modules. The CE programme has been sanctioned in 14 new districts taking the total number of districts where it is operational to 235. Nearly 7500 continuing education centres would be established in the newly covered districts and full time facilitators appointed.

### Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

The scheme of JSS or Institute of People's Education is a polyvalent, multifaceted adult education programme aimed at improving the vocational skills and quality of life of the beneficiaries. The objective of the scheme is educational, vocational and occupational development of the socio-economically backward and educationally disadvantaged groups, particularly the neo-literates, semi-literates, SCs, STs, slum dwellers, migrant workers, etc. The skill-oriented programmes of JSS are mainly directed towards ensuring self-employment.

At present, more than 250 types of courses and activities are offered and 200,000 persons have been imparted vocational training so far. To accelerate the outreach, 30 JSSs have been selected for expanding activities to one additional neighbourhood district and funds are being sanctioned by NLM.

The adult literacy rate was 60% in the year 2000 and therefore to achieve the Dakar goal, India would need to achieve a literacy rate of 80% by 2015, which it seems set to achieve as per the past growth trends. As the table

Projected Adult Literacy Rates			
Year	Male	Female	Total
2005	79	52	666
2015	90	70	880

based on the Census and the National Family Health Survey projections shows, India is expected to achieve a literacy rate of around 80%, even as early as 2010-11.

## Reducing the Gender Gap

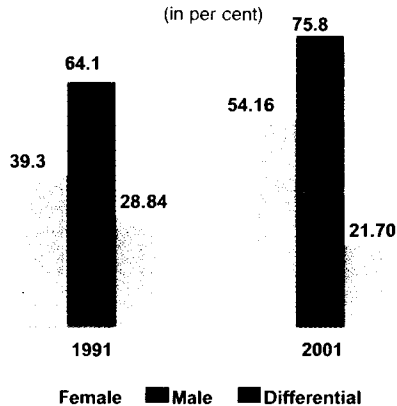
The Census of India 2001 records a 13.7 per cent increase over the literacy rate of 1991, the highest in any decade. For the first time the absolute numbers of illiterates has fallen from 328 million in 1991 to 296 million in 2001, despite the continuing rise in population. The nation is poised on the doorstep of total literacy with three-fourths of the male population and more than half the female population now literate. The female literacy rate has increased by 14.8% from 39.3% in 1991 to 54.16% in 2001. The corresponding increase in male literacy during the same period was 11.7%.



**Non- Literates**  
(in million)



**Male-Female Differential in Literacy**  
(in per cent)



Source: *Strides in Education, MHRD*

Source: *Strides in Education, MHRD*

## **Towards an Educated Female Population**

To provide a fillip to the literacy programme the National Literacy Mission has identified 45 districts in the country where the level of female literacy was below 30 per cent as per the 2001 Census. Most of these districts are in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, and Jharkhand. The NLM is implementing local-specific interventions in these states with the participation of NGOs and local communities as well as accelerating the implementation process over a period of 6-12 months.

---

### **Innovative Interventions**

**Uttar Pradesh:** An accelerated programme is being implemented in 8 low female literacy districts through a network of 100 NGOs benefiting approximately 2.5 million women

**Bihar:** The focus is on 15 districts involving Panchayati Raj Institutions, volunteer women teachers, and self-help groups covering 3 million illiterate women.

**Orissa:** One million women covered through the participation of 120 NGOs in 9 districts.

**Jharkhand:** The project targets 500,000 illiterate women in 5 districts.

---

## Achievements towards EFA

The accelerated efforts towards EFA, which are already showing results, have firmly set the country on the path to ensuring a better quality of life for all its citizens. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the National Literacy Mission targeted at the child and adult populations are together rapidly changing the face of India's education scenario. The SSA is bringing and retaining more and more children in schools, especially girls, while the NLLM is enabling more and more adults to become literate. The special programmes being implemented by the NLM are sharply focused on the requirements of equitable access to learning and life skills programmes and rapid reduction in the gender gap in literacy.

