

**SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)  
SEVENTH JOINT REVIEW MISSION**

**MAHARASHTRA STATE REPORT  
(23-29 JANUARY 2008)**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Seventh Joint Review Mission team comprising of Mr S. C. Tripathi<sup>1</sup> (GOI), Mr P.G.K. Nair (GOI) and Ms Shanti Jagannathan (European Commission) visited Maharashtra between 23 and 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008 to review progress against program interventions and towards overall goals and objectives of SSA.

The Mission benefited from extensive discussions with State Project Director, Mr Narendra Kawde, Head of the Quality Cell, Mr Abhayankar, State Project Controller, Mrs Smita Kakan, and all the thematic heads in charge of various components of the program. The Mission members visited Latur and Jalna districts and were able to interact with the Education Officers and their teams, a number of teachers, children, Cluster and Block resource persons, parents and VEC and Panchayat members. The Mission visited primary and upper primary schools, Vasti Shala, MPEGS, a Kasturba Gandhi Baalika Vidyalaya and a special camp for pre-school preparation for children with Special Needs. At the beginning of the mission, a visit to a specially organized TLM exhibition was also arranged. During a wrap up meeting, the Mission benefited from the views of the State Principal Secretary, Education, Mrs Sharvari Gokhale and discussions.

The team would like to thank representatives of MPSP and the two districts for spending a lot of time with the Mission, answering queries and for organizing excellent field visits, and the State Government for the kind hospitality and open sharing.

The latest available State level data on key SSA indicators are captured in Annex 1. The DISE data for 2007-08 collected up to September 2007 has not yet been compiled so the figures relate mostly to 2006-07 data.

During the field visits, the mission observed many positive changes in the schooling scenario, such as hexagonal classrooms with plenty of air and light, child friendly learning corners, surfeit of teaching learning materials, girls' toilets, school gardens which included medicinal plants and fruit trees, play area for children in the school complex (admittedly the team probably saw the best of schools!) evidence of community contribution to school development, school compounds, discussions on quality issues at the local level, apparently close interaction with VEC members and the Panchayat representatives, teachers being aware of different learning levels amongst children and

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Tripathi visited the State briefly in the beginning of the Mission before going on to cover Rajasthan State; the other two members carried out the full mission and prepared this aide memoire.

the need for remediation. In Latur, the residential program for children with IED appeared to be an excellent example of a pilot experiment to bring about school readiness of these children. The special teachers need to be commended for their intensive work with these children. In Jalna, the KGBV showed that a residential program for ensuring upper primary schooling of girls can take the educational aspirations considerably further as many now wanted to go on to high school education. Many girls from this KGBV had excelled in sports and gone on to taluka and district level events.

## **II. Out of school children**

The state has been steadily reducing the number of out of school children. The December 2006 household survey revealed 1,17,077 out of school children (excluding Mumbai city). Current estimates after the 2007 enrollments in regular and alternative schools, is 22709 children.

The rate of decrease in out of school children has been faster in the general category than in the SC/ST category of children. Not much difference between out of school boys and girls is observed.

The State has used a variety of alternative schooling strategies to enroll out of school children – MPEGS, Vastishala, Rajiv Gandhi Sandhi Shala, bridge courses and supportive seasonal hostels for children of migrants. Nashik, Nanded, Nandurbar, Thane, Pune, Parbhani, Akola and Buldhana are districts that account for a predominant share of out of school children. *With the State on the last mile to assure full enrolment, more differentiated and tailor made strategies for children of migrant labour, urban poor, tribals and minorities would be in order.* In addition, tracking closely the mainstreaming of children from these different alternative schooling facilities (that run for 2 or 3 years) into mainstream schools, particularly with a view to ensure that children who do not manage to be mainstreamed at the end of the period do not drop out of the schooling system is important for the success of these strategies. The mission noted the State's intention to develop an urban component in the 2008-09 Plan. It is important to complete surveys in urban locations, particularly Mumbai city and to identify resource agencies and innovative strategies in this area. To secure retention of newly enrolled hard-to-reach children, it is crucial for the state to put in place an approved policy for the upgradation of alternative centres into regular schools. The Principal Secretary informed the team that such a policy is under discussion and consideration and that the State is consulting other state governments for an inventory of approaches taken so far.

## **III. Equity and Inclusion**

The share of girls in enrolment at both primary and upper primary levels is close to half (47.32 for primary and 47.20 for upper primary). The NPEGEL programme is in implementation in 36 blocks and 20 slums with infrastructure and training support. Last year, the State has introduced a program called 'Meena Munch' to support the enrolment and retention of upper primary girls. In the coming year, training and material support to all the districts are foreseen. During summer 2007, 10352 never enrolled and drop out

girls were enrolled by Meena members. *It is suggested that continued focus on identified blocks for intensive inputs for girls are continued.*

The implementation of KGBV in two places is mired in writ petitions filed against the selection of NGOs. 20 of the 36 sanctioned KGBVs are yet to be operationalized. MPSP informed the mission that quotations have been invited from NGOs and the selection process will be completed shortly. *It is advisable to review the current status of out of school girls and to fine tune the KGBV strategy taking into account current realities and needs before operationalizing the remaining units.*

Considerable progress has been made in increasing enrolment of SC and ST children. However, drop out is a matter of serious concern for tribal children (at 24.95% for primary and 42.38 at upper primary). The State has introduced a Tribal Policy for education from July 2007 and has appointed tribal coordinators in the tribal districts. *It is suggested that the State focuses on priority blocks for Tribal education on the lines of priority blocks for girls' education.*

Impressive progress is noted in bringing an increasing number of children with special needs into the education stream. During the district visits, the mission witnessed heart-warming efforts to provide support to children with special needs. Close cooperation with the medical department for identification of needs, corrective surgeries and supplies of special aids and the deployment of special mobile teachers and appliances have contributed to inclusive education. Latur is one of the districts implementing a pilot residential training program for IED children. The mission suggests that the State considers potential cooperation with special schools run by the Social Welfare department and NGOs to enrich the special education inputs to these children, even as they enroll in regular schools. This might be important as regular teachers, even if trained for educating children with special needs, may not be able to fully address individual needs of these children in making progress in education. The Mission notes that of the 2793 special mobile teachers sanctioned for IED, only 850 are currently in position, and the remuneration is considered too low. Less than 50% of the budget sanctioned for IED in 2007-08 was expended until December 2007. In Latur district, the Mission was informed that there are a number of NGO institutions – 8 for Hearing Impaired, 13 for children with Mental Retardation, 10 for Visually Impaired children and 1 school run for the blind by the Government. *The state and district authorities would do well to ensure convergent and mutually reinforcing support to the holistic education and development for IED (like for drinking water and toilets).*

#### **IV. Infrastructure provision**

There is visible progress in the expansion and quality of school infrastructure. New schools and classrooms that the mission saw during the field visits in the two districts had incorporated child friendly features. The civil works and facilities enhancement has progressed beyond provision of school classrooms to including girls' toilets, drinking water, kitchen sheds, construction of play facilities in the school compound and school

gardens. These additional features have been secured through coordination with the Total Sanitation Program for toilets, Bharat Nirman for drinking water and mid day meal program for kitchen sheds. There is need to complete the targets for constructing new schools. Although sanctioned toilets and drinking water in 2007-08 are aimed at covering all schools, progress in completing the targets is slow, with less than 50% of girls' toilets reported completed and 66% of drinking water completed. Of the 11592 civil works that remained incomplete in March 2007, the State completed 7312 upto December 2007. The remaining are projected to be completed by March 2008.

Although the state average of primary-upper primary schools shows a comfortable 1.58, there are district variations. 6 districts have quite adverse ratios – Nandurbar (5.88), Dhule (4.67), Jalgaon (2.06), Wardha (2.26), Raigad (2.52) and Ahmednagar (3.50). Priority to these districts is warranted.

## **V. Drop out and Transition**

The drop out rates in Maharashtra decreased from 15 to 12.33 for Primary and from 26 to 20.75 for Upper Primary between 2002 and 2006. Dhule, Hingoli, Nandurbar and Parbhani have primary drop outs of over 20% and Hingoli, Nandurbar and Thane have upper primary drop outs of over 40%. There is no gender difference in drop outs, except in the case of SC girls who have a higher drop out than SC boys. The most worrying figures are to do with STs at upper primary level, with over 50% ST girls on average dropping out. In Aurangabad, Kolhapur and Raigad, over 70% of girls are dropping out at upper primary level. These figures clearly call for specific initiatives to tackle such untenably high drop out rates. While category wise data does not exist, it is obvious from existing information that drop outs among children of migrant workers are quite high. Of the 1.7 lakh children identified as children of migrant workers, over 1.2 lakh children migrate for more than 6 months, calling for a sustainable strategy to help these children continue their studies. While the State has come a long way in implementing Seasonal Hostels and on-location schools, a sharper policy towards migrant children is suggested. While earlier NGOs ran seasonal hostels for migrating children, from this year on, only VECs have been allowed to run these hostels. It is suggested that comparative strengths of NGOs continue to be tapped in this difficult area of providing education to a highly mobile population, where children tend to be found in particularly fragile conditions. An intensive monitoring process and reinforced inputs and provisions for such children and parents may be necessary to make a success of such new strategies.

The State reported some issues in effectively tracking drop out rates taking into account data for repeaters in Class V which might skew the picture of transition rates. In 2006-07, transition rate in the state (class 5 enrolment in 2006-07 versus class 4 enrolment in 2005-06) is reported at a state average of 93.94. An accurate picture in this regard is likely to emerge with the implementation of a Child tracking system. The State has prepared terms of reference and invited applications from agencies to undertake a comprehensive child tracking system of out of school and in-school children. It is

advised that the State may wish to create a core group or a task force to pilot test such an effort and secure its technical robustness prior to implementing it full scale.

## **VI. Teachers and teacher training**

The total number of teachers in Maharashtra in all categories are 487668 in 2006-07: the proportion of female teachers declined to 42% from 48% in the previous year.

The national study of student and teacher attendance shows 89% student attendance at both primary and upper primary level and 87% teacher attendance at primary and upper primary levels. However, other than empowering VECs to monitor teacher attendance, there is as yet no systematic recording of teacher attendance or teacher time on task by the State. (this is expected to be taken care of by the new quality monitoring initiative-while teacher attendance may be recorded, there is as yet no formulation of an approach to track teacher time on task.

Despite the state's no single teacher school policy, 6.1% schools in 2006-07 were single teacher schools. Of the 35 districts, 11 have single teacher schools higher than the state average of 6.1%. 5 districts – Nandurabar, Gadchiroli, Thane, Raigad and Sindhudurg - have more than 10% schools that are single teacher pointing to the need for addressing teacher deployment. While average teacher pupil ratios in all districts except Nashik is as per norm, block level analysis, including the prevalence of multi-grade situations will help to ensure teacher presence is adequate for effective teaching. Priority to KGBV and tribal blocks for providing female teachers is desirable (proportion of female teachers in tribal districts is well below average and in 11 districts, the proportion of female teachers is less than one-third).

KGBV teachers need to be covered in the training programs (currently only textbooks are provided in these centres) and coordination with tribal department for training of their teachers, would strengthen teacher development. While Head Master training is being provided to all graded head masters, the state could consider extending the same training to those teachers that are de-facto performing the functions of a head teacher and to the teachers of single teacher schools.

The achievement of the state's targets in teacher training appears to be always low in terms of reported figures. For the past few years, the state prepares a budget for teacher training based on an estimate to training 100% teachers (as per GOI' suggested approach). However, the State has a declared policy that each year only 50% of teachers will be trained each year. The remaining funds for teacher training are used, with the approval of GOI, for other quality inputs. In order to be consistent, it might be better to project the right picture regarding number of teachers for training.

There have been a number of research studies on teacher training by the SCERT. However, most of these studies, their findings and recommendations are to do with the teachers themselves and the process of teacher training. It might be useful to review the

impact of teacher training on instructional quality and process in schools and on student learning. Given that there is now a substantial amount of teaching learning aids that have been prepared and the supply of self-learning cards by which teaching is supported in the 'active' schools in Latur and in 'gammat shalas' in Jalna, the state may wish to consider evaluating the effectiveness of these aids in contributing to grade specific competencies and also whether they are designed to help children at different levels of learning. Sporadic interactions in classrooms revealed that there was considerable variation in, for instance, children ability to read – some read very fluently and some had a lot of difficulties in the same class and grade. The mission found that in general teachers were quite aware of the issues concerning learning (for eg, in more than one instance, the teacher pointed to a child who is apparently a slow learner!); it would be useful for Cluster and Block resource persons to follow up on whether these differential needs are being met.

## **VII. Financial Management**

The State's share released has been consistently lower than the approved sharing pattern during 2001-02 to 2007-08 except in 2003-04 and 2006-07. There was an accumulated shortfall of Rs.5538.49 lakhs upto 2007-08 with reference to Govt. of India releases. The implementation of SSA has not been affected for lack of funds mostly due to availability of huge unutilized funds and resultant closing cash balances. Against the approved outlays of Rs.89523.47 for 2007-08, release of State funds upto December 2007 was only Rs.7450.36 lakhs, or 32.62 % of the state share of Rs.22,836.03 lakhs. Delays in release of State Share and further delays in receipt by the Maharashtra Prathamik Shikshan Parishad (MPSP) after issue of release of orders were noticed. During 2005-06, the last installment of state share of Rs.4668.02 was released by State Govt. on 24.05.2006 and actually received by MPSP on 21.06.2006 i.e in. 2006-07. Delays in release to District Project Officers beyond the prescribed 15 days and sometimes even during the last working days of the Financial were noticed in 2004-05 and 2005-06. Delays continue in 2006-07 and 2007-08 and reasons need to be analysed for remedial action.

Advances awaiting adjustments at the end of 2006-07 amounted to Rs. 264.77 Crores against the annual expenditure budget of Rs. 1015.50 Crores. Yearwise breakup of these outstanding balances were not available. Reasons for these outstandings require to be analysed and action for early settlement taken.

In terms of Budgets and Actuals, while there was almost near total achievement in financial terms under interventions like Maintenance Grant, Innovative activities, school grant, etc., financial achievements in respect of interventions like new school building, teachers salary (new ) etc. were poor. The reasons attributed by the MPSP for the poor achievements were non-commencement of certain civil works etc.

Delays ranging from one month to four months were noticed in certification of Annual Accounts, their approval by Executive Committee and submission to Govt. of India during 2004-05, to 2006-07. The Annual Accounts for 2006-07 though submitted to

Govt. of India on 21.01.2008 is yet to be approved by Executive Committee. Delays occurred due to late receipt of certified accounts for Statutory Auditors / Lead Auditors.

The Annual accounts of MPSP showed existence of huge cash balances at the close of all Financial Years from 2003-04 to 2006-07 representing unutilised funds on different interventions at State, District, Block and Village levels. Such cash balances varied from Rs.34.60 Crores at the end of 2003-04 to Rs.243.06 Crores at the end of 2006-07. Timely release of funds coupled with adequate planning in meeting the programmes within the targeted times can bring down such balances. Though Bank Reconciliations at both State and District levels are being carried out, such reconciliation at Block / Village level are not that regular though this showed considerable improvement.

Procurement Plans during 2006-07 and 2007-08 have not been prepared and submitted alongwith respective AWPBs but later. The Procurement do not contain plans for procurements of items like Office equipment, Computers, Office Furniture etc. A Full time Purchase Officer is appointed under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. However, most of the purchases except Computers are made at VEC and District levels.

Maharashtra Prathamik Shikshan Parishad is following the provisions in the Manual of Financial Management and Procurement published by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. A vernacular version of the manual has also been brought out for use at District/Block/Village levels. The Executive Committee of the MPSP has decided that the State Govt. rules for procurement of materials/components in SSA, as well as provisions in the Manual of Financial Management and Procurement should be followed. The village/School Education has to decide the fast way of procurement in certain cases. Most of the purchases, like TLM, Teacher Grants, School Grants, Repair Grants were made at village.

Computers and accessories worth Rs.18.54 Crores were procured in the year 2003-04 to 2006-07, using Rate Contract at State level and supplied directly to designated schools. Though the warranty period of computers procured in 2003-04 have expired service contracts for maintenance have not yet been finalized. Follow-up action to ascertain achievements on computer education is required.

Internal Auditors for each district are being appointed separately at State level / Division wise for a period of 3 years on the basis of tenders floated. Internal Audits for the period upto 30/09/2007 have been completed and Reports submitted. Out of 460/524 audit observations raised for the period upto 2004-05 / 2005-06, 451 and 496 are still outstanding for want of compliances.

### **VIII. Quality and Learning levels**

In national assessments of student learning, the state of Maharashtra figures somewhere in the middle group. The NCERT learning assessment of Class V (mid term study) revealed that students in Maharashtra scored between 50-60% in EVS, 40-50% in Maths,

60-70% in Language, with the combined figure of scores being 50-60%. The State is currently in the process of finalizing the tools for MAS.

The mission observed visible focus on attention to quality issues both state and district levels. Maharashtra has implemented a number of quality improvement measures. The UNICEF-supported Primary Education Enhancement Programme (PEEP) would be upscaled to 12 districts in the State for activity based teaching learning processes. A number of initiatives and support are underway to improve student learning and quality of education. Activity based teaching learning is being implemented in a number of schools. In the two districts visited, the Active School initiative and Gammat Shala initiative were being implemented. The State has distributed free student workbooks to all schools and this workbook is also used as a means to link communities to the learning process as the parent is requested to sign the practice work carried out by the child in the workbook. Child friendly learning environments have been created with learning corners and a wide range of teaching learning materials. For upper primary classes science related materials have been provided, keeping in mind the syllabus. Rs 38 crores has been set aside for the current year for remedial education. This has included teacher training, distribution of handbooks to teachers and workbooks to all children. Pictorial dictionary, prepared by the Text Book Bureau of the government of Maharashtra is being provided to students of Class III and IV, with focus on girls and SC/ST students from Class III. A mobile library has been planned in 409 CRCs that will circulate to the cluster schools, with a selection of 119 books. Remedial teaching in schools is provided in a 61-day crash format, which is monitored closely, after which remediation by teachers is more on an 'as and when required' basis. It is suggested that ongoing remedial teaching is also monitored by the block and cluster resource people to track the results.

In April 2007, the State issued one of the longest-ever Government Resolution (GR) for the implementation of an all-round quality improvement program. An exhaustive and extensive assessment tool has been developed to rank schools according to student learning, teacher personality and community participation parameters. This tool assesses the holistic development of the child, including physical and emotional development. It includes testing children against MLL, remedial teaching, skill development and preparing children for competitive exams (the mission found extensive focus on helping children to prepare for the class IV and VII scholarship exams. There appears to be a fair amount of duplication in quality tracking tools and formats – SCERT format, SSA Quality Monitoring Tool format and format developed by the Quality Control Cell of the MPSP (the last one itself has about 22 formats that need to be filled by teachers and the three items of student learning assessment, teacher assessment and community assessment is in addition to the 6 annual assessments of children (4 tests and 2 exams). The mission would like to strongly suggest that these are harmonized and rationalized in a way that data collection is not cumbersome and progress in student learning can be tracked more comprehensively. Formative assessments to improve TL would also be useful. In view of litigations in the past for the 3 R program, which was then discontinued, it may be wise to undertake some stakeholder consultations prior to formalizing the tools.



## IX. Recommendations

- ❖ Increasing the targeted nature of strategies for out of school children, particularly for children of migrants, urban poor and tribals. The mission suggests that the State begins discussions for potential synergetic action with the department of social welfare and NGO institutions for the education of children with special needs. An inherent part of consolidating access of hard to reach children would be to formalize a policy towards upgrading EGS and Vastishalas into regular schools, which is pending. There have been litigations in court over this issue and as a result the Cabinet has not yet approved such a policy. The State could explore concurrent options and other formulations based on other state experiences to resolve this matter expeditiously. It is also important to ensure, in the meanwhile, that children that do not manage to be mainstreamed from alternative education facilities to regular schools at the end of 2 or 3 years as the duration may be do not drop back out of school.
- ❖ In terms of planning and management, it now appears that block-level attention and support is crucial for addressing both remaining deprivation and addressing variances in educational development – this has to with inputs in the form of teacher deployment, classrooms, upper primary schools (where district averages look quite good, but with considerable block variations) or with addressing drop out rates, retention, transition and learning levels.
- ❖ It is suggested that the State fine tunes the strategies of KGBV and urgently addresses constraints that come in the way of their rapid operationalization. Given the ongoing litigations, it would be good to sharpen strategies and increase coordination with the Tribal Department to tackle the tribal districts and blocks that present tough challenges and address the very high drop out rates for upper primary girls in tribal districts.
- ❖ Detailed and timely preparation of annual procurement plans at State / District levels showing mode and schedule of procurement require to be submitted to Govt. of India alongwith Annual Work Plan & Budget for approval. Cases requiring deviations from these plans to be reported subsequently.
- ❖ Training on double entry book keeping is required to be given to accounts staff from Village to State level as staff especially working at lower formations are not adequately conversant on these matters.
- ❖ The mission suggests that collection and reporting of data under the new comprehensive quality improvement and quality monitoring is reviewed towards harmonizing and rationalizing student assessment systems and to link student assessments to improving instructional process and quality interventions. It is recommended that a consolidated strategy is finalized after sharing with key stakeholders, particularly teachers to ensure its acceptability, and its continuation for a certain period of time. Once initiated they should be sustained and not changed from year to year.
- ❖ It is recommended to review the strategy of supply of computers under various heads to schools and to provide the requisite educational material and maintenance provisions.