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National Education Plans**

Financing and Implementing National Education Plans

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**Country Report at the
UNESCO International Seminar on Financing and
Implementing National Education Plans**

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Education policies and strategies

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GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL REPORTS

I. Introduction to the topic

A survey carried out by UNESCO in 2002 shows that the plans, whether ready or still in the process of being developed within the framework of the follow-up to the Dakar Forum, have taken different forms, such as: (i) sector development plans, (ii) existing plans revisited or strengthened, (iii) EFA-specific plans, (iv) EFA programmes or projects, (v) projects focusing on specific needs or areas such as quality improvement and lifelong education, etc.

Whatever forms these plans or programmes have taken, one of the major and immediate concerns is how they are going to be implemented. Authorities and specialists involved in their elaboration are asking the following questions:

- Will the plans, once arduously developed, be effectively implemented, or once adopted, will they be shelved once more ?
- Will there be enough resources, not only financial but also human and technical, to carry them out ? Are the institutional capacities sufficiently strengthened to ensure their implementation ?
- Will the commitments made by the present governments be respected by the following ?
- Will the funding expected to come from or promised by the international community arrive, if yes, up to what scale ?

The conditions of the effective implementation of these plans are therefore numerous and complex. Of these, the financial factor is certainly one of the most important. However, other equally important aspects, like the necessary reforms and the strengthening of institutional capacities, should not be neglected.

The seminar entitled *Financing and implementing education development plans* is part of a series of UNESCO activities aiming to help the Member States to effectively achieve the objectives of EFA. This seminar, devoted to one of the three retained themes in this regard, will attempt to show how countries effectively implement their plans, what main difficulties they face and how they have overcome them.

II. Aspects to be examined in the reports

As mentioned above, this international meeting, part of a series of seminars whose respective themes were designed in a way to complement one another, will focus on the theme of implementing national plans once they are ready.

The actions foreseen in the plan are often numerous, ambitious and complex. Sometimes the education administrations have not prioritized them at the moment of the plan's preparation, and even if these actions were designed with a certain order of priority, the question to know how to proceed with their actual implementation has yet to be resolved. Some would say resources, financial in particular, should first be ensured, others would say that before everything else, political, institutional, and administrative reforms should first be put in place, in order to create the favourable environment and conditions for the efficient and rational use of allocated resources.

How then could the implementation of these plans be started, which are supposed to have been designed on a solid and technical foundation, and approved according to a process of social consultations and democratic validation? Can the reform measures, the rationalization and improvements foreseen in the plans be immediately applicable without a deeper sub-sector analysis, and without a preliminary negotiation on the foreseen measures concerning the teachers for example, especially on those concerning their status? The same applies to the local groups if they deal with decentralization. Are the institutional capacities able to manage and monitor the planned actions ?

The question of resources necessary for the implementation of the plans should also be debated and resolved. It is not only about sufficient allocation of resources, human and/or financial, but also their rational and efficient utilization. What measures have been taken in order to ensure a more efficient management of resources ? How could the quality of educational services be improved ? What is important here is not only to make some savings on the costs but also, and above all, to use the allocated funds in a more equitable, transparent and efficient manner.

This seminar also finds its justification in the premise of the Dakar Framework for Action: *« no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources »*. In this regard, several options and objectives would be explored, such as - to cite only those included in the Dakar Framework:

- «(i) increasing external finance for education, in particular basic education;*
- (ii) ensuring greater predictability in the flow of external assistance;*
- (iii) facilitating more effective donor coordination;*
- (iv) strengthening sector-wide approaches;*
- (v) providing earlier, more extensive and broader debt relief and/or debt cancellation for poverty reduction, with a strong commitment to basic education; and*

- (vi) *undertaking more effective and regular monitoring of progress towards EFA goals and targets, including periodic assessments.»*

The options mentioned above justly summarize the major tendencies and current debates surrounding financial co-operation in the field of education. In developing countries as well as in industrialized countries, in the context of budgetary constraints and/or economic difficulties, national or international services, financial in particular, exert growing pressures on education administrations to make them demonstrate that allocated funds are being used efficiently. Bilateral and multilateral agencies expect that development actions are planned in a more transparent, accountable and efficient way.

This requirement changes the way agencies collaborate with the beneficiary countries. Gradually and in a more and more accelerated way, the project approach gives way to programme approach. Instead of financing sub-sector and sometimes fragmented projects, some agencies prefer financing sector plans and programmes. Sometimes financing goes directly to national budgets, provided that these plans and programmes are credible and transparent. This implies that they have the right to examine and "interfere" with the plans and programmes. *The external partners are being more and more involved in upstream activities of educational development*, meaning in the definition of educational policies, plans and programmes. The agencies would feel more concerned and "aware of their responsibilities" in the implementation of the plans and programmes developed in this way. *The question of increased financing must therefore be addressed not at the moment of implementation, but "upstream", meaning at the moment of designing the plans.*

There is no *one* programme approach, but several sectoral approaches, ranging from a simple co-ordination mechanism to SWAP (*sector-wide approach*) which, finally, consist in financing the national budgetary expenditures, and not specific projects, by putting all the external contributions together to finance the national plans and budgets. Some countries, notably the least developed countries (LDCs), are experienced in this sector co-operation and co-ordination approach between the governments and the partner agencies. They have succeeded in mobilizing the technical and financial resources, first for sector planning, and then for the implementation of education development plans. Others were not able to succeed for one or some of the following reasons: (i) they do not know these co-operation approaches; (ii) the constraint that their complexity involves; (iii) the preference for or the relative simplicity of financing by project, or (iv) the perception of the SWAP approach seen as an infringement on national sovereignty.

In the light of the foregoing, the reports and the debates of the seminar will be structured around national *experiences, lessons, and good practices*, accompanied by insightful examples. Participants will attempt to answer the following five questions:

- (i) How do governments intend to create the conditions favourable to the implementation of these plans, in particular the reforms they foresee ? In the case where countries have to rely on international financial co-operation for the implementation of the plans:
- (ii) How can the partnership in the formulation of educational policies and development plans be reconciled with the leadership role of national governments?
- (iii) How can the national capacities for the execution and the follow-up of plans, as well as those for co-ordination of bilateral and international co-operation be strengthened ?
- (iv) How can plans be made reliable/feasible, and projections credible, from the perspective of potential donors ?
- (v) How can external financing be increased for the implementation of the plans ?

Let us examine each of these five questions closely:

- **Conditions favourable to the implementation of the plans**

The plans should be prepared on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the current situation of the education system and of its probable evolution, through a technical, participatory, and transparent approach. Their implementation, in the context of a coherent economic and social development, calls for a synergy between the concerned actors and the adaptation and renovation efforts with regard to sector management and monitoring capacities. The reform and improvement of the education sector is therefore a continuous process which should be planned and managed. In this regard, the participants of the seminar will try to answer the following questions:

- (i) Is the preparation of your plan based on a reliable education management information system, and on an in-depth and critical analysis of the education sector ?
- (ii) Has a general consensus been built on the main political orientations and on rationalization and reform measures, through the consultation with and the participation of all the stakeholders, including other public departments, the legislative body, the teachers, the private sector, the civil society, etc.?
- (iii) What main rationalization measures have been taken on human, technical, and financial resources, and how are they (or how will they be) implemented ?
- (iv) Are the development and reform actions designed in an efficient, realistic and prioritized manner ?
- (v) Are the institutional and administrative implementation arrangements satisfactory, if not, what measures are foreseen in this regard ?

- **Government/agencies partnership in the formulation of plans or plan**

It is assumed that national authorities are the first responsible for their education system and that international co-operation can contribute to the formulation of coherent policies. The reports could take up, among others, the following questions:

- (i) What are the mechanisms and practices for partners' participation in the development of education policies and strategies ?
- (ii) Does the participation of partners provide an added value or does it serve as a substitute for national skills ?
- (iii) Does the "interference" of co-operation agencies in the elaboration of education policies and plans represent an inconvenience, an asset or a fatality that should be managed ?
- (iv) Are the different approaches (project, programme, sectoral, SWAP, etc.) mutually exclusive or complementary, and how are they applied in practice ?
- (v) Are the efficiency measures often recommended by external agencies necessary remedies or bitter pills to swallow?

- **Strengthening of national capacities for plan implementation and monitoring, and for donor co-ordination**

This concerns the strengthening of institutional capacities in the fields of planning, management, monitoring and follow-up/evaluation of the development of the system. The institutions should be able to plan and organize the actions in a coherent manner, to design and to implement the reform policies, (and in the case where the country would depend on external aid) to guide and co-ordinate the co-operation actions and to provide the necessary arguments for the assistance of external partners in priority fields. Some criticize the fact that international co-operation is sometimes substituted for national skills. Therefore, we should ask ourselves if the countries' capacities for designing and implementing education policies are adequate. Most particularly:

- (i) What are the institutional weaknesses? In what important priority fields should national capacities be developed ?
- (ii) Do the national actors have the expertise to steer the process and techniques of design, implementation and follow-up of education policies ?
- (iii) Does international co-operation contribute to the strengthening or weakening of national institutional capacities ?
- (iv) Can co-operation with external agencies contribute to a more transparent management and a more rational allocation of resources for the implementation of the plans?

- **Reliable plans and credible projections from the perspective of potential donors**

The EFA plans should be prepared by governments for their own citizens. They are, above all, national plans which should be carried out by the mobilization of national resources. They should first be credible to public opinion? Unfortunately, in numerous countries, the economic situation and development prospects, in addition to the debt problem, are such that it is difficult to attain the Dakar objectives with national resources alone, even if these were utilized in the most rational way possible. The plans and their projections have to be viable, realistic and credible, in order to facilitate the mobilization of additional internal resources as well as external financing. In this regard, we should answer the following questions:

- (i) How can the experiences of co-operation with technical and financial partners be characterized in this field?
- (ii) Up to what point does international co-operation contribute to the viability and the credibility of these plans?
- (iii) Can the satisfaction of social demand, the necessity to ensure political stability, and the "pressure" of external partners for efficiency matters reconcilable?
- (iv) To what degree are the projections of your plans credible?
- (v) In your opinion, what are the most important criteria of credibility in an education plan?

- **Increasing external financing**

In principle, the country's external financing for education should be complementary in relation to its internal resources. Governments should therefore take all the necessary measures and arrangements to rationalize and increase internal resources, including those of the private sector, communities, NGO's, etc. Then comes the question of knowing how to increase external financing, preferably in the form of grants, for the development of education. More specifically:

- (i) What concrete examples do you know in this field?
- (ii) How can the transparency in management and the reliability of information system contribute to the increase of financing?
- (iii) To what degree does the role of international co-operation in the formulation of educational policies contribute to increasing internal and external financing?
- (iv) In your opinion, do the criteria for an increase in external financing differ depending on whether they are defined by beneficiary countries or donor countries?
- (v) Is the external financing fairly distributed between the regions and countries?
- (vi) In your opinion, what are the most important solutions to the problems of increasing external financing for education?

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND FINANCING IN INDIA : AN APPROACH TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EDUCATION FOR ALL PROGRAMME

Amik Kaushik¹

Introduction

India is one of the world's largest democracies, covering an area of 3.2 million sq km and with a population of more than 1 billion. As the world's second most populous country, India is home to 16 percent of its population.

The country is divided into 35 States and Union Territories which function under a federal relationship. While the central government looks after certain subjects such as defence, railways and finance, other subjects such as law and order are the responsibility of the States. On certain subjects, both the States and the central government have concurrent powers, and education has been on the Concurrent List since 1976. The Constitution of India makes an elaborate distribution of legislative, administrative and financial powers between the Union and the States, and adequate mechanisms exist for the sharing of resources and responsibilities between the two. A major challenge in national planning is to reconcile the planning priorities of States with the national plan frame, and the National Development Council (NDC), with representation of chief ministers of all States, is a statutory body which imparts a national character to the entire process of planning.

During the post-Independence period, there has been considerable expansion in educational facilities and enrolment at the elementary stage and consequently the literacy rate has improved in every decade. The latest

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Census indicates that the literacy rate has increased by about 13.17 percentage points in a period of ten years, from 52.21 in 1991 to 65.4 percent in 2001.

Organisation and Structure of School Education in India

There are broadly four stages of school education in India, namely, primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary. In pursuance of the National Policies on Education of 1968 and 1986, there have been attempts to evolve a uniform pattern of school education with 12 years of schooling, commonly known as 10+2 pattern. The 'plus two' stage refers to classes XI and XII, which constitute the higher secondary stage in all 35 States/UTs. However, for the first ten years of schooling, the organisational patterns differ considerably among States/UTs.

Decisions regarding the organisation and structure of education are largely the concern of the States/UTs. Within the overall framework of the National Policy on Education, each State/UT has been independently determining the educational structure to be adopted. However, there is almost complete uniformity in the pattern of educational structure within a particular State or Union Territory.

The 10+2+3 pattern of education introduced in the country envisages a broad-based general education for all pupils during the first ten years of school education. The curriculum at is largely undifferentiated and little attempt is made to introduce diversified courses at this stage. The focus of the curriculum at the primary stage is on development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, study of environment in terms of physical and social phenomena, participation in activities which would develop productive skills, creative expression and habits of healthy living. In the initial years, the content and methodology are directed to the achievement of communication and computational skills with a view to developing the basic tools of learning.

Overview of Recent Developments in EFA

Both on the literacy and the primary education fronts, India has been implementing a number of specially designed programmes to move towards the goals of ensuring universal primary education and of eradicating adult illiteracy. However, as a follow-up of the Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All (EFA), an attempt has been made to link national goals and targets with the global targets of EFA.

One of the most significant developments in recent months has been the passing of a Constitutional Amendment by the Parliament which makes

elementary education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6-14 years. A Central legislation to enforce this right is under preparation. Other significant developments include the following:

- Expenditure on education as percentage of GDP increased from 3.84 to 4.11 in the government sector.
- Increase in girls' enrolment by 23 percent in primary and 40 percent in upper primary between 1990 and 2000: much higher than the boys.
- Share of girls in total enrolment has gone up from 41 percent to 44 percent in primary and from 38 percent to 40 percent in upper primary.
- Proportion of female teachers increased from 29 percent to 36 percent.

Current EFA Strategies

The strategy for achieving total literacy and universal elementary education in India focuses on several interrelated strategies.

(a) Government of India and the State governments have prepared contextualised action plans which are being implemented through the programmes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and National Literacy Mission (NLM). The focus is on reaching the unreached through innovative and alternative modes of schooling. Decentralised district wise planning introduced in the 1990s is expected to address local needs and demands more effectively.

(b) The second strategy is to actively involve the people at the grassroots through democratic devolution of powers. Though there are variations across the States, there is a decisive move towards decentralisation of educational governance all over the country. In some States, this is done through by transferring powers to local self-governing bodies, while in others it is done through the creation of empowered village education committees and school management bodies.

(c) The Indian Constitution has been amended, making basic education a justiciable fundamental right in line with the international convention on child rights.

(d) Social mobilisation and eradication of adult illiteracy are attempted through mass literacy campaigns, largely as a national programme but planned and implemented at the district level.

The Framework of Action adopted in Dakar identified six goals of EFA, which are being vigorously pursued by the Government of India. Recognising the importance of elementary education, the government has been working with State governments for achieving the goals of universalisation of elementary education (UEE). In this context, the major initiative has been the launch of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the national programme to implement the fundamental right to free and compulsory education. Other initiatives include the District Primary Education Programme, Teacher Education Programme, activities under the National Literacy Mission and special programmes for promotion of early childhood care and education, inclusive education, etc. It is important to note that a major part of planned action in India takes place in individual States, which may not get fully represented in national plans and perspectives. It is within this framework that the following national goals, corresponding to the six Dakar goals, have been drawn up.

- Universalisation of Integrated Child Development Services scheme to enable early childhood care and education (Dakar Goal 1)
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Movement for the Education for All) launched with the aim of providing eight years of quality education to all children in the age group 6-14 by 2010. (Goals 2 and 6)
- A comprehensive plan for adolescents, especially girls, in the Tenth Five Year Plan. (Goal 3)
- National Literacy Mission to provide functional literacy to all illiterate adults in the age group 15-35. (Goals 3 and 4)
- Achieve sustainable threshold level of 75 percent literacy by 2007.
- Special schemes targeted at girls, apart from focus on girls in general schemes. (Goal 5)
- Removal of all disparities, including gender, at the primary level (class I-V) by 2007 and at the elementary level (I-VIII) by 2010.

In a large country like India, it is not easy to prepare a national plan of action for EFA, as different States are at different stages with respect to the EFA goals. A genuine national plan must account for these inter-State variations, and reflect the perspectives of the civil society organisations which are involved in educational activities. Further, it should have a professional basis in setting the goals and designing strategies, for an action plan prepared only at the behest of the international community would remain a mere statement of intention. Making the plan a credible one and translating it into reality depends upon convergence of the international commitments made by the country with the national proposals, as well as the political commitment of the national leadership and the support of civil society.

Let us now turn to the individual components of the Dakar goals.

1. Early Childhood Care and Education

The provision of comprehensive health care and education to children in the early stages of development prior to entering primary school is given a special place in national education policies and programmes. This has received further impetus in recent years with a specific mention on the subject under the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution, which enjoins the State to endeavour to provide universal access to such services throughout the country.

The Eighty-sixth Constitutional Amendment has split the age group 0-14 years into two clear categories to cover their interests under separate Articles in the Constitution. Article 21A has been introduced as a fundamental right after Article 21 to read "*The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.*" Articulating the intent to specifically cater to the needs of the 0-6-year-old children, the Eighty-sixth Constitutional Amendment Act has substituted Article 45 (Directive Principles of State Policy) to read "*The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.*"

At the time of Independence, the need for pre-school education was primarily fulfilled by voluntary organisations. It was only in the 1970s that child welfare services were expanded to the health, education, nutrition and other sectors. While the National Policy for Children was adopted in 1974, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme was launched as a sequel to it in 1975. The National Policy on Education (NPE) adopted in 1986 viewed early childhood care and education (ECCE) as a feeder programme for primary education and also as a support service for working women. This approach has been reaffirmed by the Tenth Five Year Plan, which stresses the need to reaching every young child in the country to ensure their survival, protection and development, to ensure development through effective implementation of policies and programmes in the areas of health, immunisation, nutrition and education through nationwide programmes, to continue ICDS as the mainstay for promoting the overall development of young children and mothers, especially the girl child all over the country, and to recognise that while early childhood up to six years is critical for the development of children, the pre-natal to first three years is the most crucial and vulnerable period for laying the foundations for the achievement of full human development and cumulative life-long learning.

ECE in the National Context

The ICDS programme of the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) is the largest early childhood education (ECE) programme in the country. ICDS was started in 1975 in 33 blocks as a programme for the holistic development of children under six years to break the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality, and provides health, nutrition, ECE and convergence services.

ICDS also provides support to the national efforts for universalisation of primary education, through increased opportunities for promoting early development, associated with improved cognitive and social skills, enrolment and retention in the early primary stage. By releasing girls from the burden of sibling care, it also enables them to participate in primary education. The major components of the scheme include supplementary feeding, growth monitoring and promotion, nutrition and health, immunisation, health check ups and early care and stimulation of children upto the age of six.

The programme now covers most of the country, with a total coverage of more than 169 million children in the 3-6 year age group.

Apart from the ICDS programme of the DWCD, the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy has also supported early childhood education through a variety of strategies under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and the Mahila Samakhya project. DPEP has been a holistic programme for ensuring universal primary education (UPE), emphasising the centrality of pre-school education as the foundation for achieving UPE. Steps taken included coordination with ICDS for strengthening the pre-school component and opening ECE centres in non-ICDS areas.

All States have taken up the issue of school readiness programmes for children entering primary school, usually towards the end of the pre-primary stage, and in some cases in the beginning of class I. The school readiness programmes also ensure that the curriculum and teaching in the ECE centres and primary schools are synchronised.

Although different models have been followed by the States, there are common issues that have dominated the overall strategy followed by them, including building stronger linkages between the primary school and the AWC/ ECE centre, impacting enrolment through relieving children from sibling care, transition to primary school, and involving communities in ECCE.

2. Progress towards Universal Elementary Education

Elementary education in India is defined as the education from classes I to VIII, and roughly covers children from the age of 6 to 14 years. Elementary education is further divided into two stages: primary and upper primary education. While primary education lasts up to class V and covers children in the 6-11 age group, upper primary covers Class VI to VIII, and includes children in the age group of 11-14 years. However, while this is the national picture there are minor variations in some States.

The universalisation of elementary education has been a national goal since Independence. Concerted efforts towards the goal of UEE during the last five decades have resulted in a manifold increase in the number of institutions, teachers and students. As a result of these efforts, total enrolment at the primary stage increased from 97 million in 1990 to 114 million in 2000-01. At the upper primary level, the enrolment during this period increased from 34 million in 1991 to 43 million in 2001. Significantly during this period, the growth rate of girls' enrolment at the elementary level was much higher compared to that of boys. In fact, over the years, the participation of girls at all levels of school education has increased substantially. Whereas the relative share of girls' enrolment in total enrolment at primary level was only 28.1 percent in 1950-51, this has increased to 43.7 percent in 2000-01. Similarly, at the upper primary level, the relative share of girls' enrolment to total enrolment which was as low as 16.1 percent in 1950-51, has gone up to 40.9 percent in 1999-2000.

In the country as a whole approximately 35 million children are still out of school. Within the country, there are wide disparities in the educational status of different regions. Thus, while there are some regions which are close to achieving the goals of UEE, there are other which have a long distance to go before they can achieve the same. Out of a total population of 192 million in the age group of 6-14 years, the number of children attending is 157 million. Those outside the school system are mostly children from socially marginalised groups, especially girls, working children, children from poor families, disabled children and children in difficult circumstances.

Although the task of achieving UEE is daunting in a country as diverse and large as India, several positive signals and opportunities have emerged in recent years. Most important of these is the ever-increasing demand for education from parents and communities all over the country. Further, recognising the importance of the primary education sector, the central

government has been working with State governments on a principle of shared responsibility. This becomes even more important in the context of our commitment to make elementary education a fundamental right. Given the magnitude of the task, the Government of India will continue supporting initiatives in elementary education while promoting the capacities of the State governments to meet the challenges effectively.

The government's flagship programme for achieving universal elementary education is called the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which loosely translated means "Movement for the Education of All". SSA aims at providing universal enrolment by the year 2003, five years of quality primary schooling by the year 2007 and eight years of quality elementary education by the year 2010. Its specific goals are:

- All children in school, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centre, alternate school, 'back-to-school' camp by 2003.
- All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007.
- All children complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010.
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.
- Universal retention by 2010.

SSA is an effort to universalise elementary education through community-ownership of the school system. The community is the key to planning, implementation and monitoring of SSA, and the habitation has been made the basic unit of planning. Habitation-level plans are prepared first, which are then combined together to form District Elementary Education Plans. The major features of SSA include educational reforms, community ownership, institutional capacity building, community based monitoring, accountability to the community, priority to the education of the girl child, and a distinct focus on quality. SSA is an umbrella framework which includes within itself all existing externally aided as well as new projects taken up by the government.

Considering that three-fourths of the out-of-school children in the country are girls, and a substantial percentage of them belong to socially marginalised groups, the core strategy for achieving UEE must be the education of these children. If the issues of UEE relating to girls and marginalised children are addressed, all other issues would automatically be resolved. Simultaneously, efforts would be made to address the educational needs of working children, children in minority groups, urban deprived children, children of migrant

families, children of poor families, disabled children and children of hardest-to-reach groups.

SSA provides a variety of measures aimed at increasing and retaining enrolments in schools, such as free textbooks to girls and children from socially marginalised groups, free uniforms and so on. A separate mid-day meal scheme helps to increase the attendance of students as the provision of a hot cooked meal has a direct impact on attendance. For those children who have already dropped out, suitable alternative education systems would be provided such as bridge courses, remedial courses, back-to-school camps, etc., so that they can be mainstreamed into the formal system.

A simultaneous emphasis is being placed on improving the quality of education through a focus on pedagogic improvement, making teaching-learning joyful, child-centred and activity-based. This includes improved teacher training, development of local-specific teaching-learning material, interesting teaching methods, contextual curricula and textbooks, instruction in mother tongue, flexible school timings, attractive classrooms, positive environment, good quality school infrastructure and facilities, more friendly evaluation techniques, etc.

A brief description of the government's mid-day meal scheme would be in order at this point. In view of the success of this programme in certain States, the central government launched the Mid Day Meal scheme as a centrally sponsored programme in August 1995 in a phased manner, expanding it across the country in 1997-98. The objective of the programme is to give a boost to universal primary education by increasing enrolment, attendance and retention, and simultaneously impacting on the nutritional status of children studying in primary schools. Recently, the programme has been expanded to cover children studying in EGS and other alternative schooling centres opened in school-less habitations. Under the scheme, the central government arranges for the free supply of foodgrains to the States/ UTs and also reimburses admissible transportation costs. The cost of conversion of foodgrain into a meal and other logistical support are arranged by the implementing agencies. Recently, the central government has decided to construct kitchen sheds in schools under the rural development programme.

Currently, 103 million primary school children studying in about 0.8 million schools are targeted for coverage. The central government has allocated 3 million tonnes of foodgrains for this purpose, and while more than one-third of the children are being served cooked meals, foodgrain is presently distributed to others. The objective is to serve cooked meals to all children up to grade V.

Evaluation of the programme has revealed that the scheme has attracted children of underprivileged sections to schools and has led to improvement in enrolment and attendance in many States. Various studies have also shown that the programme has a positive impact on children not only in terms of attention in the classroom, regularity in attendance but also greater interest among parents to send their children to school wherever cooked meals are served at the school site.

Special attention to the educational needs of socially marginalised communities such as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is a national commitment, pursued in all the Five Year Plans. In many States, the progress with respect to enrolment and participation of children belonging to these sections has been quite satisfactory. However, statistics reveal that the objectives of equity are still elusive in many parts of the country. Considering that the SC/ST population is not homogeneous in all respects, the endeavour would be to refine the identification of target groups even among the SC/STs and identify particular sub-groups which are seriously handicapped and require greater attention.

During the past few years, tribal education has witnessed a rapid transformation, particularly in the areas of access, pedagogic reform and community participation. Much emphasis has been given to the improvement of access in tribal areas through the schemes of non-formal education (NFE), alternative schools, community schools and the Education Guarantee Scheme. However, there are still habitations in the tribal-dominated districts which remain unserved by primary education facilities, and there is a need to address this issue on priority. Other interventions planned include incentives in the form of free textbooks, uniform, stationery, scholarship, and transport allowance, improving access by setting up appropriate schooling facilities in unserved habitations, improving quality of education for SC/ST children and ensuring equity, engagement of community organisers from within the communities to work towards raising the level of awareness for education among the community, ensuring ownership and management of schools by SC/ST communities by greater representation in VECs/PTAs, training, using local teachers, providing context-specific interventions in the form of hostels, incentives or a special facility, adapting the curriculum and providing locally relevant teaching-learning materials to tribal students, and converging between the Tribal Welfare Department, tribal development authorities and the education department.

Educating children who are compelled to join the workforce prematurely instead of attending primary schools is a major problem, which has defied

effective solution for a long time. Enrolling such young children who are already in the labour market and ensuring that they complete primary schooling assumes even greater significance in the current economic scenario of a liberalised economy. India has the largest number of working children in the world. Estimates of working children in the country vary very widely. According to 1991 Census, there were 11.28 million child workers, of which 91 percent were in rural areas. Besides, 7 million are involved in household work, 88 percent of them being girls. Thus if a comprehensive definition of work is taken, the total incidence of child workers is quite substantial and merits serious attention.

The Ministry of Labour, which is the nodal ministry to formulate and implement schemes relating to eradication of child labour, has initiated the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) to impart education to working children. The Department of Elementary Education and Literacy would coordinate and cooperate with the Ministry of Labour by providing academic support in the form of designing appropriate curriculum, development of teaching-learning material, training of instructors, imparting vocational skills, designing modes for learners evaluation, etc. Further efforts would also be made to encourage NGOs to take up specific innovative programmes to promote education for working children. It would be necessary to make education of school-going children obligatory on the part of those who engage them for work.

The strategies for working children focus on the elimination of child labour itself, wherever possible. This requires multi-pronged efforts with strong component of mobilisation of various stakeholders. The problem of working children and their education cannot be treated only as a responsibility of the Labour or Education Department. It is a multi-sectoral problem. Successful strategies and innovations tried out in the country would be upscaled, while intermediary arrangements such as short-term camps, and bridge courses to prepare them for joining schools in the grade suitable for their age would be made. Mobilisation of all the stakeholders, i.e., parents, children, employees, PRIs, media, etc., has to be taken up simultaneously. The efforts of different departments/agencies working in the area of child labour, especially the Department of Labour, must be coordinated and ongoing programmes like NCLP and others supported as required.

Recent studies have shown that there has been inadequate participation of children of minority groups in elementary education. Hence, special attention would be given to these children. In the case of Muslims, the effort to promote education among girls and literacy among adult women would be of particular importance. The curriculum and other programmes of religious

schools and similar institutions, catering to educational needs of minorities would need modernisation with the introduction of the teaching of science and mathematics. Specific arrangements for orientation training of teachers in those institutions to transact mainstream curriculum would be required. Some of these models have been successfully tried out in different States.

A large number of children in India do not attend school because of poverty. Although education is free, the private cost of education in terms of uniform, textbooks, stationery and transport is often beyond the means of poor parents. Surveys reveal that the cost of schooling is cited as the main reason for children never attending school or not currently attending school, and this reason is almost twice as likely to be mentioned for children never attending school as for children not currently attending school.

The cost of schooling will be still higher if opportunity cost and indirect costs are added to the direct cost. Non-enrolment, non-achievement or dropping out is generally found among children from the low-income category. It has been observed that enrolment rates show a distinct relationship with household income. About 82 percent of households in the country fall in the two lowest income categories, and approximately the same proportion of children come from these income classes. As unequal distribution of education is both a source and consequence of poverty and social exclusion, incentive schemes for all children below the poverty line have been recommended to meet the cost of education. The incentives would be in the form of free textbooks, uniform, stationery, scholarship, and transport allowance, and efforts would be made to revamp the incentive delivery system so that the benefits actually reach the target groups.

Children who are designated as hard-to-reach are those who are likely to be left out despite all interventions. They are children living in very small and remote habitations where no form of schooling is available, children of migrant families, children engaged in household chores, children of sex workers, children in juvenile homes, children living in coastal areas and belonging to fishing communities, etc.

Landless labourers or families from agriculturally backward areas in India are forced to move out of their villages when no work is available. The families go looking for work as wage labour on various job sites, and the migration is seasonal in nature, i.e., the families leave their village for a specified period and return once the work is over. When the families migrate, children usually accompany them. The wages for the work are so low that the entire family has to work to support themselves and also save money for the lean period. Children from such families either do not enrol or drop out of schools.

Successful models for education of migrant children like vocational courses, farm schools, and seasonal community halls have to be upscaled.

A large number of children, especially girls, do not attend school because they have to attend chores like cooking, bringing water, collecting firewood, washing and cleaning, taking care of their younger siblings, grazing the cattle, and taking food for their parents to their work sites. The Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education addresses itself to the educational needs of the hard-to-reach children. The scheme provides for diversified strategies and flexible financial parameters. A range of options, such as EGS, back to school camps, bridge courses, remedial teaching, seasonal hostels, etc., is available under this scheme which is flexible and responsive to local requirements. The ultimate objective of the scheme remains to mainstream children who are out of school.

It is estimated that there are about 6-10 million children with special needs in India in the 6-14 age group, out of the total child population of 200 million in 2001. Out of these, only about 1 million children with disabilities are attending school. The goal of UEE cannot be achieved unless all children with special needs are included in the formal or non-formal education system. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995 stipulates that free education would be provided to all disabled children up to the age of 18. All children with special needs must have access to schools, which would accommodate them while meeting their distinct needs. SSA makes special provisions for such children, providing additional allowances on an annual basis for identified children.

Historically, education programmes in India have tended to be more rural-focused, largely because more readily identifiable social, political and economic structures have helped to make educational planning relatively easier. However, the urban population in India has grown from 159 million in 1981 to an estimated 330 million at present, which represents about 30 percent of the total national population, and it is expected that this share would increase to about 45 percent by 2015. Increasing urbanisation has led to mounting pressure on civic infrastructure, particularly since investments in these facilities have not been commensurate with the growth of the population. In addition, low incomes coupled with the high cost of living in urban areas have meant more and more people living in difficult and vulnerable circumstances.

These deprived urban children are in different categories, including children living in slums or unauthorised colonies, working children or children engaged in domestic labour, children from migratory families, street children,

children of sex workers, orphans, etc. Clearly, it would be necessary to plan for each of these groups distinctly, and no single plan would be able to cover the needs of all the groups.

Unlike rural areas, where administrative arrangements and structures tend to be similar, urban agglomerations can be vastly dissimilar. Although elementary education is a subject allocated to urban local bodies under the Constitution, there is little uniformity in the management of the subject between cities. While education may be looked after by the urban local body in one city, in another it may be the responsibility of the State's Education Department. Accordingly, it is not possible to define any one strategy that can meet all requirements.

The issue is further complicated by the complex inter-relationships between developmental, social and political structures in urban areas. It may be recalled that the nature of rural-urban migration is such that most poor urban people occupy public or government land on which little or no investment for the improvement of infrastructure is deemed necessary. In as much as these slum clusters are unauthorised, the local bodies are not able to officially consider investing in development, as this could be seen as legitimising the initial encroachments.

The problems of educating the deprived urban child are complex and varied. These include the cost of education, lack of schooling infrastructure, lack of specific incentives for such children, unsuitable location of schools, and so on. This is compounded by the fact that since each city presents a different set of circumstances, no unique solution can be found to address the needs of every city.

It is also important to realise that there are wide socio-economic disparities in urban areas. While basic services are available to the economically better off, large sections of urban society living in unauthorised colonies/slum clusters have no access to basic facilities, including education.

Government schools in urban areas coexist with privately provided facilities, and are often ill-equipped in terms of infrastructure and basic amenities. Differences also exist in the curriculum transacted, particularly with reference to the study of English. Further, even though children may be formally enrolled in schools, a large number of them, particularly girls, remain out of school. This may be on account of social and/or economic reasons. In general, there is a lack of incentive for poor children in urban areas to attend school. In fact, there may even be a strong disincentive in terms of loss of earning, poor quality of teaching, lack of infrastructure, the location of the school, etc.

At times, the issues may be even simpler, as for example, the difficulties faced by small children who need to cross a busy road to reach the local school.

Under SSA, measures such as convergence between various government departments and the municipal corporation, formation of educational plans for all children of urban areas, opening of new schools and EGS centres, relocation of government and local body schools near colonies and settlements, and improving quality and the infrastructure of government schools in urban areas are being taken up. Strategies like bridge courses, transition classes, camp schools, etc., are also being adopted for providing education to children living in difficult circumstances, and these courses are being organised with the help of private sector educational institutions and NGOs working in the area. At the same time, the formal school system would be prepared to accept children who are first generation learners and, therefore, lack parental support in academics. Wherever necessary, early childhood care facilities are also being set up to address issues related to sibling care, etc.

The government views non-governmental organisations or the voluntary sector as partners in the march towards achieving the goal of education for all. This comes out of the realisation that no single delivery system, be it in the public or private domain, can achieve the goal of UEE without the participation of the voluntary sector. Also NGOs that offer alternative development models have established reputation in terms of accountability, quality of services, cost effectiveness, innovation, closeness to the grass-root and effective management style. NGOs have made significant contributions to education in developing new models of pedagogy, innovative curriculum, teaching, learning aids, new textbooks, teacher training, community empowerment, effective school management, building environment and institutional development, and government agencies have adapted or replicated many of these innovations.

The corporate sector has also taken a lead in recent times in working with the central and State governments and NGOs to achieve the goal of basic education. For instance, one of India's largest financial institutions, ICICI, has set up a Social Initiatives Group (SIG) to focus on development-related initiatives. Pre-primary and primary education are among the three areas on which the SIG is focusing its attention. The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has set up a Primary Education and Literacy Committee, through which it works with its affiliated units to build alliances to support EFA programmes. The Azim Premji Foundation set up by the Chairman of WIPRO—a leading IT company—is solely committed to the cause of elementary education and has been working with the governments of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. This expanding role of corporate

citizens will provide an additional impetus to the EFA movement in the coming years.

The task of providing basic education in a country as diverse as India is so large that it is unrealistic to expect the government sector alone to meet the needs of society fully and effectively. Even though private initiative has always been a part of the school education endeavour, it has neither been large nor of a sizeable magnitude in the efforts to universalise elementary education. The country has not been able to fully utilise the potential of the private sector, and without abdicating the responsibility of the government sector to providing basic education, it would be our objective under SSA to evolve a synergic public-private partnership to achieve the objective of UEE.

The private sector can contribute not only in monetary and material terms but also in the form of expertise for quality improvement through effective management of the system and development of locally relevant teaching-learning materials. More collaborative efforts at institutional level, as well as programme implementation level, would be designed to expand the role of private initiative in elementary education. Already there are successful examples of such collaboration through the twinning of public and private schools in many States.

Private fee-paying school system, a phenomenon till recently seen only in the urban areas, that too in the secondary education stage, is now gaining prominence in the elementary education sector even in rural areas. New private schools have contributed to raising parental awareness, even among poor and illiterate parents, of how schools should function. Together with measures initiated by the government, this phenomenon has also contributed to the increasing social demand for universal elementary education.

Certainly, the growth of private schools itself is a positive sign of the rising demand for education. But if these schools are expanding rapidly because of the decline in government school quality and dysfunctional government schools, or due to poor school infrastructure and management or on account of teacher negligence and absence, then these are areas of concern. It is the massive governmental school system on which the poor still rely for basic education, especially in rural areas. Therefore one of the thrust areas must be to improve the quality of government schools, teacher accountability and the infrastructure. The increasing share of the private sector in the additional enrolment has implications for projection of requirements in terms of teachers, classrooms and other inputs to achieve UEE.

The open learning system (OLS) is also an important dimension of the efforts to reach school education to all. OLS at the school level would be strengthened for providing education from the elementary stage and above to meet the needs of those who are unable to seek education through a full-time institutional system, especially girls, SC/STs and weaker sections, with assured equivalence to institutional learning in terms of certificates. The scope of the OLS channel would be expanded to bring more academic and vocational areas into its fold and cater to a larger student population from various segments of society, both in school and adult education sectors.

The open school system has recently been expanded through the establishment of State Open Schools, and greater emphasis is now being placed on networking and collaboration for the use of distance education and information and communications technology (ICT) for basic education. At the national level, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) offers open basic education equivalent to grade VIII level through the distance education mode.

Computer education at elementary education level (particularly at the upper primary level) is being accorded a priority in order to make students familiar with computers. For this, three levels of computer education are envisaged. The first stage would be computer literacy or computer orientation to children and the second stage would be computer-aided learning, and the third stage would be computer-based learning. At present, a large number of elementary schools in the country are not electrified and infrastructure facilities are not adequate to open computer learning centres. To begin with therefore, one or two schools in every cluster in the country would be provided facilities for computer-based learning that could be used by children in the adjoining schools. Networking of institutions in the form of school complexes would help in promoting the sharing of infrastructure and expertise.

Mobilising civil society to participate in the programmes of basic education is essential for achieving the goal of UEE. Communication and media strategy would be designed to sensitise, mobilise and motivate the stakeholders, community, opinion leaders and the public for achieving the goals of UEE. A multimedia campaign with strong media advocacy, employing a wide range of vehicles of communication, from folk and traditional media to electronic media, outdoor publicity and print media, has already been launched.

3. Girl's education

Let us now look at girl's education. The persistent low educational participation of girls till recently had adversely impacted on women's empowerment in India. Such educational backwardness of a defined segment of population has not only denied them individual growth and development, it has slowed down the pace of national development and resulted in skewed attainment of development indicators.

This is despite early recognition of the value and need for female education. In fact, much before international commitment to girls' education was expressed as a follow-up to the EFA goals, the policy environment in India had recognised the criticality of educating girls if UEE were to be achieved. This was evident from the pro-girls/women constitutional stance that empowered the State to make special provisions for women and children notwithstanding the fundamental obligation of non-discrimination on the basis of sex. This provision has enabled the State to draw up special policies and programmes to benefit girls and women to overcome their backwardness and address gender differences.

The National Policy on Education (1986) brought the issue of women's equality to centre stage when it stated that *"Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women.... This will be an act of faith and social engineering.... The removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention in elementary education will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services setting time targets and effective monitoring...."*

It was acknowledged that achieving universal elementary education (UEE) would be impossible unless concerted efforts are made to reach out to the girl child. Since the mid-1980s all basic education programmes have been designed to incorporate these policy perspectives and recommendations. The first generation basic education programmes all emphasised the focus on girls' education. This intent was taken to scale through the District Primary Education Programme, which made female literacy rate a selection criterion for project districts and set goals of reducing gender disparities in enrolment, retention and learning. In the same vein, SSA reiterates the need to focus on girls' education to equalise educational opportunities and eliminate gender disparities.

Addressing the question of women's empowerment through education, the Mahila Samakhya programme was introduced in three States in 1989. From modest beginnings, this programme has spread to many more districts in the country and is poised for further upscaling during the Tenth Plan Period. The thrust on female education received further fillip from the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, introduced in 2001, which emphasises equal access to women and girls, adoption of special measures to eliminate discrimination, to universalise elementary education, to eradicate illiteracy, to create a gender sensitive educational system, to increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and to improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning, as well as development of vocational/technical skills. Reduction of gender gaps, achievement of sectoral time targets in existing policies and development of gender-sensitive curricula have also been stressed upon in the policy document.

Forward-looking policy statements need not necessarily mean actual change at the ground level. For change to be apparent, there has to be fuller utilisation of the policy statements in planning and implementation. Though major gains have been recorded in enrolment and retention of girls over the years and gender gaps have narrowed considerably, they still persist. Similarly, although the share of girls' enrolment to total enrolment at the primary and upper primary stages has risen sharply and dropout rates have reduced, gender disparities still persist, and these areas need to be specially addressed. Different approaches need to be taken up to address social, cultural and economic reasons which affect the attendance of girls in schools, in addition to providing appropriate school infrastructure.

The basic education programmes have been succeeded by the national programme of SSA, which expects that all children would complete five years of primary schooling, and gender gaps at the primary level would narrow by the year 2007. By 2010, SS aims to have all children complete eight years of elementary education and bridge gender gaps at the upper primary level.

A special component of SSA provides a special package in almost 2300 educationally backward blocks to give a thrust to girls' education through intensified community mobilisation and local-specific interventions that focus on the school environment, support services like child-care centres, and special incentives. To give a greater focus to the hard-to-reach groups of girls, especially those residing in small, scattered habitations, which are distant from schools, the Kasturba Gandhi Swatantra Vidyalaya scheme for provision of residential schools in the identified backward blocks is being launched, with a special focus on girls from marginalised communities.

The experience of the Mahila Samakhya has shown that concerted attention on women's and girls' education requires a separate thrust. This ensures that gender concerns are built into every intervention and strategy and are not lost sight of in larger UEE targets. It has also enabled the building of capacities for girls' education, in terms of staff, in terms of institutions and teaching learning materials. Girls in the programme are more aware, self-confident and aware of gender issues, as these are thrust areas in the programme. The programme has also been able to focus on marginalised communities which are the hardest to reach and to bring into the educational stream, since they are inhibited by livelihood and socio-cultural issues and taboos.

The country strategy has, therefore, been a two-pronged approach, including gender mainstreaming and introduction of specific schemes for promoting the education of girls and women. The gender mainstreaming approach is targeted through the UEE programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and its components, the District Primary Education Programme, Lok Jumbish Programme, the teacher education programmes and the Mid-day Meal programme. More focused and specific gender-based interventions shall be implemented through gender-based programmes, which focus exclusively on women and girls. This will ensure special attention and earmarking of funds for girls, especially those in educationally backward areas and more disadvantaged groups like the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

4. Quality concerns

The elementary school system in India has grown in size consistently, achieving an enrolment of more than 150 million. This obviously poses a major challenge not only for efficient management but also for mobilising resources needed to maintain even a reasonable level of quality. It is recognised that quality improvement in education cannot be carried out on a turnkey basis in a pre-specified time-frame. Quality improvement is a complex question, unlike improvement in infrastructure, appointment of teachers or even equipping schools with better academic facilities. Learning from past efforts, it is realised that there is no single-factor solution for the problem. With this in view, the government has pursued a five-fold strategy consisting of (a) improvement in the provision of infrastructure and human resources for primary education, (b) provision of improved curriculum and teaching-learning material, (c) improving the quality of teaching-learning process through the introduction of child-centred pedagogy, (d) attention to teacher capacity building, and, (e) increased focus on specification and measurement of learner achievement levels.

Considering that the country has more than half a million primary schools, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the status of provisions in all the schools. The Fifth and Sixth All India Educational Surveys, conducted by NCERT, showed that though there has been some improvement between 1986 and 1993, schools continued to suffer from deficiencies in infrastructure facilities. Most of the primary and upper primary schools being co-educational, the absence of separate urinals and lavatories for girls, particularly in upper primary schools, can be a major hurdle in the participation of girls.

Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, each of the 0.85 million elementary schools receives maintenance and school improvement grants on an annual basis. Further, all teachers in these schools are entitled to a grant every year to develop TLM. SSA also envisages a massive programme for construction of additional classrooms, new school buildings, toilets and drinking water facilities, and about one million new additional classrooms are expected to be constructed by 2007.

With the expansion of educational facilities over the years, the number of teachers has also increased. The government policy is to provide at least two teachers to every primary school initially, and ultimately, the endeavour is to provide one teacher for every class or section in primary schools. In the upper primary schools, the teachers are provided on the basis of subject teaching and

teaching workload. During 1990-91, the teacher-pupil ratio in primary schools was 1:43, and 1:37 in middle schools, which remained constant in 2000-01. Over the years, teacher-pupil ratio has remained constant, with the increase in teacher recruitment just about keeping pace with the increased enrolment.

Given the role of women teachers in increasing the enrolment and retention of girls, it has been stipulated that 50 percent of the teachers being recruited henceforth would be women. Prior to the process of recruitment, the States would be carrying out intensive rationalisation of the existing teachers. Because of lopsided development, it is seen that certain schools and areas, especially urban localities, have teachers far in excess of what they should have as per the 40:1 norm. In contrast, remote areas are often starved of teachers. To rectify this anomaly, the States would have to take up the exercise of rationalisation first before they embark on the recruitment process.

Since a large number of teachers are required in a short period, traditional methods of recruiting teachers would not be sufficient to meet the needs. Hence, alternative methods are being attempted to recruit teachers in various States. In States where the requirements are comparatively less, the traditional route of recruitment would continue to be followed. However, other States are seeking to decentralise the teacher cadre, so that the teacher recruitment takes place at least at the district level, if not at the village or block level. Some States have made the local self-government bodies responsible for managing the teacher cadre. Other States too, while retaining teachers as government functionaries, have decentralised the management to the district or block level. This would not only facilitate easy recruitment but also enable better accountability and easy monitoring.

One problem being faced by many States is the non-availability of trained manpower slowing down the recruitment process. While efforts would continue to expand the capacity of pre-service training in partnership with the private sector, the States have been given the option to fill up the immediate needs through recruitment of community teachers. This involves recruitment of academically qualified persons from the community by the village itself. These community teachers are given compressed orientation training before they start teaching, which is reinforced annually through a series of modules, with the aim of providing them professional qualifications after 3-5 years.

Improvement in the quality of teachers through effective programmes of teacher education is central to any quality improvement programme in basic education. It is with this in view that, as envisaged in the National Policy on Education (NPE), a national programme of restructuring teacher education in

the country took shape in the 1990s. The programme was further reinforced through actions initiated under different EFA programmes, including DPEP. These efforts are being continued with further strengthening on an all India basis for moving towards the goal of providing quality basic education for all.

Before 1987, the main source for academic support and training for teachers in elementary schools was the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) in each State. Since this was proving to be inadequate to meet the capacity building needs in most of the States, a national programme was initiated to establish a District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) in each district exclusively to cater to the development needs of elementary education of the particular district, and to work out mechanisms for providing support to teachers at sub-district levels. The establishment of a DIET in each district was therefore a major step in taking the support system nearer to the field. During the last ten years more than 400 such district level institutions have been established. This process of decentralisation has been further extended under EFA projects through the establishment of block resource centres (BRCs) and cluster resource centres (CRCs), the main function of which is capacity building among teachers.

Three key roles for the sub-district centres have emerged: teacher training, supportive visits to schools, and a monthly cluster meeting of teachers to discuss issues related to classroom transaction. These resource centres provide a modality for involving teachers in the process of quality improvement. Regular school visits by CRC coordinators have made a contribution to the functioning of schools and classroom transaction, and given teachers improved confidence that they are not isolated. There are many examples of BRCs and CRCs holding vibrant academic discussions in monthly meetings, documenting folklore for use in classrooms, establishing math labs, developing libraries, etc. The sub-district resource centres also have tremendous impact on the nature of in-service training for teachers. Infrastructural residential facilities at the block level make it possible to have frequent training programmes on a wide range of issues such as multi-grade teaching, developing TLM, student evaluation, specific content areas, basic pedagogic issues and so on.

Thrust areas in teacher education identified for the next five years include the development and strengthening of teacher education institutes, training of teachers, pre-service as well as in-service, and professional development of practitioners, i.e. teacher educators, managers and others. A Resource Support Programme (RSP) that is dynamic, responsive to emerging needs and builds on existing strengths of various institutions has been put in motion to upgrade the quality of teacher education in the country. The RSP will provide a

framework to support the development of specialised professionals such as curriculum developers, evaluators, and educational management experts, experts in the teaching of mathematics, science and other disciplines, and would be a critical aspect of the education of teacher educators.

It has been realised that even with the establishment of an extensive institutional network, continuous upgradation of knowledge and skills cannot be done effectively in view of the perpetually expanding system of schools and teachers. With this in view, a major move was made in the 1990s to use modern technology and distance education mechanisms to reach out to schoolteachers on a continuous basis. Two programmes in this regard need to be mentioned. One is the expanding programme of reaching out to teachers and teacher educators through a satellite-based teleconferencing network. The second is the fairly large-sized Distance Education Project within the framework of the DPEP. Both the programmes are operated in a collaborative fashion involving various organisations and national and State-level organisations.

Considering that curriculum and textbooks play a very significant role in quality improvement efforts, special steps are being taken to revise the curriculum for all stages of schooling and to bring out improved versions of textbooks. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education-2000 emphasises the development of independent and rational thinking, ability to construct knowledge and solve problems among learners. However, curriculum prescription and textbook preparation for schools is a decentralised phenomenon and essentially a subject handled by State governments. Only a broad national level curriculum is suggested, and State-level authorities decide on the specific curricular inputs and teaching-learning material to be followed in all the State-supported schools.

The last ten years have witnessed a variety of activities in the area of curriculum and TLM preparation in all the States. These efforts will be strengthened and continued in the coming years. The purpose of the exercise has been mainly to make the material more relevant, interesting and child-friendly. The specification of minimum levels of learning (MLL) in the early 1990s at the national level also prompted the States to take up the task of curriculum and textbook revision. Three factors have characterised the process of material development. First, a participatory approach has been the high point of the textbook development process, involving teachers, field personnel and experts from SCERTs. Secondly, people involved in textbook development have been periodically exposed to 'good practices' of other States and NGOs. Thirdly, in most States, field trials of textbooks and other material

have been undertaken to identify gaps that could be corrected before large-scale introduction took place.

As a result of the above processes, the new textbooks for primary school grades are significantly different from the old ones. The language used is much simpler and familiar to the child. The books now offer space to build in the local context for classroom transaction. Attention is also paid to illustrations and font size in an effort to make them more child-friendly. Some States have embarked on preparing integrated textbooks, i.e., using the same lesson to transact language and environmental science skills, especially for the first two classes. Teachers' guidebooks have also been developed to facilitate classroom transactions.

Improving the availability of textbooks is another important area to be strengthened. Over the years, State governments have launched a number of schemes to ensure free textbook provision for marginalised children. This was further reinforced under the District Primary Education Programme. These efforts for provision of academic inputs in terms of textbooks and TLM has been institutionalised as a frontal mainstream initiative under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. All SC/ST children and girl students at the elementary level would be provided free textbooks.

The two-fold strategy of curriculum renewal and textbook revision will continue in the years to come as a regular feature. It is, however, realised that the effectiveness of transaction will depend on the use of a variety of teaching-learning material in the classrooms. It is with this in view that under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, special emphasis is laid on preparation and use of instructional material by classroom teachers. Towards this end, a TLM grant is given to each teacher every year, which allows teachers to make and use different kinds of materials as per need. The purpose of the scheme is to help the teachers prepare low-cost TLM for activity-based transaction of the curriculum in different subject areas. A second strategy would be to simultaneously encourage States to develop school libraries to augment the academic resource base for teachers as well as students.

In the final analysis, the quality of education depends on the nature of the teaching-learning process. In fact, studies have also brought out that non-attendance of children in schooling and subsequent dropping out from school for many of them is determined by the nature of this process. It is in this context that a number of activities to improve the quality of classroom interactions and making them child-centred and joyful have been initiated during the last several years, and under SSA these initiatives would be further reinforced.

The main thrust is to help teachers make the classroom processes more contextualised to local conditions characterising the school and the community. It is accepted that many schools have to continue working under minimal infrastructure and learner support material for the time being. In spite of additional teachers being appointed in many project schools, the majority of schools in the country—perhaps 80 to 85 percent—involve multi-grade teaching. This, perhaps, is inevitable with more schools in smaller habitations being opened. Adapting to such conditions and making the teaching-learning process still effective is a big challenge faced by the primary school teacher.

The 1990s witnessed a high level of importance being assigned to the assessment of learner achievement. The first prompting for this came from the special emphasis given to learner achievement in the NPE. However, the main thrust for activity in this regard came from the specification of minimum levels of learning at the national level through an expert body set up by the Government of India. Following this, most of the State governments with the help of NCERT and SCERTs not only revised their curriculum and textbooks but also initiated programmes for measuring learner achievement on a regular basis. The Government of India supported a number of projects to study and work out the processes needed for achieving competencies by all children.

A second set of efforts in this direction emerged with the launching of EFA projects which carried out baseline studies to assess the achievement of learners in various classes of the primary school. Some of the projects have even set targets for raising learner achievement levels in a phased manner. For instance, DPEP has set the target of raising achievement levels by 25 percent during the project period. However, no all India survey has been conducted to determine the current levels of achievement. Further, since the programme content, as well as context of schooling, is quite different in each State, it will be difficult to generalise the progress made in this regard. Finally, though the initial results show positive change in the learning levels of children in different project schools, one cannot expect any dramatic upswing in learner performance, as this depends not only on inputs provided in the school, but is also influenced by many other socio-economic contextual factors which do not fall within the purview of education development projects. It may be counter-productive to start anchoring all quality improvement efforts only to improvement in performance of learners in achievement tests in selected subject areas. It would be more appropriate to couple these with a focus on other areas of learner growth and development, which are not necessarily performance-based and measurable outcomes.

Learner achievement levels will be monitored by conducting nationwide periodic achievement surveys in all States at different stages of elementary education. The baseline achievement surveys at the end of class V and class VII/VIII are in the final stages of analysis, and their results should be available soon. Tests for another survey at the end of classes VII/VIII have been finalised and these are being administered in the current year. Further, mid-term assessment surveys will be undertaken again after a gap of about three years to initiate mid-term corrections, if required, in the implementation of SSA. Finally, a nationwide terminal survey will be conducted around 2010 to gauge the extent to which the goals of universalisation of quality education at elementary stage have been achieved. All these surveys will be comprehensive studies of the impact of school environment, home environment and personal characteristics of students and teachers on the teaching-learning process.

The experience of implementing EFA projects during the last ten years has made it clear that along with the macro-level initiatives described above, micro-level activities looking at schools as institutions and dealing with school-specific problems are necessary. With this in view, several States have undertaken school-based quality improvement programmes, in which quality related activities are undertaken on the basis of school needs. This has been supported intensively from the central level. Strengthening these efforts will be one of the major strategies for quality improvement under SSA.

It has been the policy of the government to encourage innovations in education with a view to learning from the experience of such innovations and mainstreaming the successors. Under SSA, each of the 600 districts will be able to access up to Rs.5 million every year to carry out innovations in the field of early childhood care (ECC), education for girls and SC/ST children, and computer education. The districts are expected to associate resource institutions, university departments and DIETs and NGOs in this process. Moreover, under the scheme of Innovative Education, the central government will continue to support NGOs and other groups working in the field of elementary education, both on issues related to targeting the more difficult groups of out-of-school children, as well as on improving the quality of learning.

5. Out of school youth and adolescents

Adolescents, or persons aged 10 to 19 years, are imbued with a sense of idealism, justice and truth. However, a section of the adolescent population, because of one reason or other (which may be economic, social or psychological), strays from the normal path, and needs special attention. A majority of the adolescents from this section leave the regular education stream and join the group of out-of school youths.

According to estimates, adolescents constitute 22.8 percent of the population of the country, which means approximately 230 million persons in India belong to this group. Out of this, male adolescents constitute 12 percent and females 11 percent.

The most important issues pertaining to adolescents include health, nutrition, education (both formal and non-formal), vocation, recreation and sports, child labour, children in difficult situations, alcohol and drug abuse. All adolescents need to be made aware of issues like safe motherhood, reproductive health rights, sexuality and sexual responsibility, age of marriage and first pregnancy, family size, health care, hygiene, immunisation, HIV/AIDS prevention, importance of education, drug and alcohol abuse. They should also have some legal literacy and be made aware of vocational opportunities and career planning.

On the education front, poor attendance in schools and higher dropout rates are causes of concern. The situation is more discouraging in rural areas, where only 49.6 percent of the boys and 30.6 percent of the girls in the age group of 15-19 years were found to continue their education beyond class VIII, as compared to 67.4 percent for boys and 63.8 percent for girls of the same age group in urban areas. The encouraging news is that the gender gap of literacy percentage was reduced to less than 10 percent in 1991, and it has reduced further in 2001.

The development of adolescents falls under the purview of several ministries of the Government of India, including Human Resource Development, Social Justice and Empowerment, Labour, Health and Family Welfare, and Youth Affairs and Sports. This last is the designated nodal ministry for the development of adolescents. The draft National Youth Policy 2001 provides a comprehensive overview of youth issues and concerns. It views youth as a vital resource to be nurtured for the development of the country and advocates "working with youth and not merely for youth", thus underlining the

importance of youth participation in all programmes. The policy highlights several areas of concern for adolescents and youth in the country and emphasises an inter-sectoral approach, stressing empowerment and gender equity. It gives a special focus to the educational needs of adolescents, including non-formal education. The Draft Youth Policy makes a distinction between the age of adolescence (13-19) and the age of attainment of maturity (20-30 years), marking a shift towards distinguishing between these different phases. By marking the age of adolescence, the policy facilitates efforts to focus on adolescents in government programmes.

The National Policy on Education 1986, as modified in 1992, in emphasising the universalisation of primary education and the eradication of illiteracy, especially for the 15-35 age group, covers youth and adolescents. The policy also refers to meeting the non-formal educational and vocational skill requirements of youth. The National Population Policy 2000 has recognised the earlier invisibility of adolescents and identifies them as a section of the population which needs special attention. Special mention has been made about developing a health package for adolescents and enforcing the legal age of marriage. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001 recognises the girl child as a separate category and within this category, adolescent girls. The policy covers their nutrition, education, health, violence and sexual abuse against them, and the rights of the girl child.

While the above policies and schemes cutting across ministries covered adolescents, there was no comprehensive policy exclusively addressing their needs, especially for those who were out of school. Recognising this gap, the Planning Commission constituted a Working Group to look into all aspects of the issues related to adolescents. On the basis of the recommendations of the Working Group, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is developing a new programme to address the educational needs of adolescents, with special emphasis on girls. Under this programme, financial and technical support would be provided to autonomous bodies of the central, as well as State governments, local government bodies, and NGOs for creation of an environment wherein the special needs of adolescents are recognised and provided for. This would include sensitisation towards the needs and problems of adolescents of parents, teachers, government functionaries, law enforcement agencies, media, youth and adolescents themselves through sustained awareness and advocacy campaigns, capacity building of NGOs and government functionaries dealing with adolescents, and development of a sound database on adolescents, along with a focus on research on issues relating to adolescents in difficult circumstances.

Life skills, as defined by the World Health Organisation, are the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demand and changes of every day life. Life skills may be broadly classified into thinking skills, social skills and negotiating skills. Adolescents would be offered educational programmes by NGOs and government bodies on life skills to empower them with the ability to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life effectively and to enhance their productivity, efficacy, self-esteem, self-confidence and interpersonal relations. The modules on life skill education would be based on the ones developed by some NGOs with the support of UNFPA and UN Interagency Working Group on Population.

Provisions for psychological counselling and career guidance of adolescents by providing appropriate information have been made so as to address their various concerns, including health, familial, financial, psychological, social, sexual and emotional problems. This would help in making realistic choices, preventing disruptive deviations and overcoming stress. These career guidance centres for both school-going and out-of-school adolescents would be set up in universities and educational institutions having psychological and counselling departments.

The Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) is an autonomous organisation of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, with offices in 500 districts of the country. It has become one of the largest grassroots organisations in the world, catering to the needs of more than eight million non-student rural youth enrolled through 189,000 village-based youth clubs. These clubs work in the areas of education and training, awareness generation, skill development and self-employment, entrepreneurial development, thrift and cooperation, besides development of the body through sports and adventure. For implementation of the programmes, every district NYK has a trained cadre of district youth coordinators, national service volunteers and youth leaders. The NYKS plans to cover all districts of the country during the Tenth/Eleventh Five Year Plan for effective mobilisation of rural youth, and is expected to organise one youth club/*mahila mandal* in each village having a population of 300 or above, so that the goal of covering nearly 600,000 villages in the country is achieved during the next fifteen years.

It is also planned that at least one youth development centre would be set up in each of the 5000 blocks of the country during the next fifteen years and 1000 such centres would be upgraded to serve as real centres of information to the rural youth by providing them with internet connectivity.

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is an autonomous organisation of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, which was established in 1989 primarily to take care of the educational needs of those who had to discontinue their formal school education for a variety of reasons. NIOS has an average annual enrolment of 250,000 students with a total enrolment of 750,000 students, each of whom receives support and education in 1700 centres located throughout the country and abroad (Nepal, Middle-East and Canada). Out-of-school adolescents and dropouts are encouraged to enrol and continue their education through a new facility, which allows the students to choose the subjects of their interest, offers a flexible examination system and allows transfer of credits from other boards. Under this system, a candidate may opt for an examination at the time of his/her convenience and in as many courses/papers in which he/she feels comfortable.

NIOS launched the Open Basic Education (OBE) programme with the objective of providing basic education to the neo-literate, as well as out-of-school adolescents, among others. Education at the OBE stage is free. This programme is run with the help of more than 150 NGOs, who implement this programme through NFE centres. NIOS has also laid emphasis on the special educational needs of physically and mentally challenged persons, including adolescents, and established a cell to implement and monitor the initiatives taken in this regard.

The Department of Elementary Education and Literacy has also focused on the specific needs of girl adolescents through the Mahila Samakhya programme. Mahila Shikshan Kendras (centres for girls' education) are in operation in six States, namely, Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Assam with the objective of ensuring equal access to educational facilities for adolescent girls and young women. Adolescent girls, who have dropped out from the formal education system are provided educational opportunities through NFE centres. The programme has gained considerable popularity in the last few years, as it has responded well to the growing demand among adolescent girls for completion of formal education, as well as the acquisition of leadership and vocational skills. Under the programme, adolescent girl groups have been set up, which provide life skills education to out-of-school girls. Various *melas* (fairs) for adolescent girls are organised under Mahila Samakhya with the aim of creating opportunities for education and self-development of adolescent girls.

Lok Jumbish, a programme jointly launched by the Government of India and Government of Rajasthan in 1992, has been organising residential camps of about six months' duration for adolescent girls since 1995. The participants of such camps are provided with primary education and are also taught various

empowerment activities. Lok Jumbish also started short-duration camps for boys and girls in upper primary classes to introduce the students to reproductive health and other issues relevant to adolescents., in addition to a non-formal education programme.

The Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) also supports policies and interventions for adolescent girls. It is recognised that the adolescent girl child still continues to experience discrimination throughout her life, and that unfortunately existing socio-cultural practices also make it difficult for her to overcome the handicaps posed by her unequal status. Taking note of this situation, the Tenth Plan reaffirms the life-cycle approach for the adolescent girl child. During this period, efforts will be concentrated to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violation of the rights of the adolescent girl child by undertaking strong legal measures, including punitive ones. These include strict enforcement of relevant legislations along with eradication of harmful practices such as female foeticide/infanticide, child marriage, child abuse, child labour and child prostitution. The Department's main programme is the ongoing scheme of Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY), launched in 1991-92. The programme aims at the empowerment and self-development of adolescent girls in preparation for their future productive and reproductive roles as confident individuals, not only in family-building but also in nation-building. The KSY, now in operation in 2000 ICDS blocks of the country, will be expanded further to another 2500 blocks. Moreover, it is also proposed to add counselling facilities to the present package of health, education and nutrition awareness, besides strengthening the component of vocational training and development of entrepreneurial skills.

A long-term developmental measure launched during the Ninth Plan in the name of Balika Samridhi Yojana will be expanded widely during the Tenth Plan to extend incentives not only to the girl child but also to the mother of the girl child, so that she is assured of State support for the future of the child. Similar initiatives, which have already proved to be successful in some of the States, will be replicated in other parts of the country.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment deals with social issues related to adolescents and also supports the education of adolescent girls from socially backward sections of society such as scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) through a scheme for providing scholarship and hostel facilities. The Ministry is implementing the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 through a programme to cater for the care, protection, development and rehabilitation of both neglected and delinquent adolescents. The aim of the programme is to enhance the quality of institutional care and to develop and support a system for separate handling

of non-delinquent and delinquent children at various stages of their apprehension, processing and rehabilitation. The Ministry has adopted the approach of processing only the cases of those juveniles through the formal system of police, courts and correctional institutions, which could not be handled by the non-formal social control mechanisms within the family or community. The Ministry utilises the services of voluntary welfare agencies at various stages of referral, treatment and rehabilitation of juveniles, especially with regard to non-delinquents.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare supports initiatives to address HIV/AIDS education in schools, broadcasts radio and TV programmes to target adolescents, and implements the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Programme providing maternal care, nutrition facilities and prevention of unwanted pregnancies, etc. The Ministry has joined hands with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in running drug de-addiction centres and supporting NGOs in the same cause. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is also engaged in taking care of health-related needs of adolescents. It realises that AIDS is a major problem among youth and that nearly 50 percent of the new HIV infections are occurring in young people between 15 and 24 years of age. The fundamental risk for young people is their ignorance about issues of sexuality, HIV/AIDS/STDs and the dangers of unprotected sex. The Ministry is trying to address these issues through appropriate dissemination of information and capacity building.

6. Adult Education

The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched in pursuance of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, and its Programme of Action, for the eradication of adult illiteracy. By the time the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) at Jomtien in 1990 began to survey literacy efforts, India had already embarked on a programme of eradication of illiteracy in a mission mode. A mass campaign approach emerged as the main strategy to tackle the problem of adult illiteracy. By the time the "Year 2000 Assessment of Education for All" was undertaken, NLM had traversed a long distance, covering most parts of India through the Total Literacy Campaigns (TLCs) while also fine tuning the strategies for linking literacy with skill upgradation, quality of life improvement, etc., under the post-literacy and continuing education programmes. These were the very concerns that the successive EFA meets voiced. Simultaneously, NLM also began to address specific issues like community involvement and NGO partnership. Thus, by virtue of constantly benchmarking its strategies in relation to the EFA concerns, NLM has been able to keep the target fulfilment far ahead of the dates set by the Dakar Framework for Action.

Starting with the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) in Ernakulam in 1990, NLM has covered 587 out of the 600 districts in the country under literacy programmes. By March 2003, 190 districts were in the TLC stage. One hundred and ninety-six were under the post-literacy phase, while 201 had moved to the continuing education (CE) stage. Through its mass campaign approach, NLM has reached out to more than 150 million non-literates and made 98 million people literate. More than 60 percent of them are women. The socially disadvantaged scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) together account for 36 percent.

The increase in population of the age group 7 years and over has been about 26-27 percent during each decade. Increase in literates was by about 52 percent during 1981 to 1991 and by about 59 percent during 1991-2001. The absolute number of illiterates increased during 1981 to 1991 but substantially declined during 1991-2001. In percentage terms, the increase during 1981-91 was 8.7 percent, while the increase during 1991-2001 was 13.2 percent. Clearly the progress of literacy during 1991-2001 has been much higher as compared to the progress made during the earlier decade. This is attributed to better educational efforts as well as to the fact that for the first time, these efforts seem to have overtaken the growth in population, as a result of which the absolute number of illiterates has started declining.

In the five decades after Independence, the increase in the literacy rate during the last decade has been the highest, i.e., from 52.2 to 65.38 percent, despite the corresponding increase in the total population. Even more significantly, the absolute number of illiterates has declined by 31.9 million. For the first time, the country witnessed a faster growth in female literacy (from 39 to 54 percent) than that of males, which increased by only 11.72 percent (from 64 to 75 percent). The gender gap in literacy, which was 25 percent in 1991, reduced to 20 percent in 2001. There is also, for the first time, a converging trend in the rural-urban literacy gap. Between 1991 and 2001, rural literacy rates increased by 14.52 percent while urban literacy rates increased only by 6.98 percent, thereby reducing the urban-rural gap from 28.39 percent in 1991 to 20.85 percent in 2001.

However, if one looks beyond national aggregates, there is considerable variation in the literacy scene among the States. While nine out of the 35 States and union territories (UTs) are now in the high literacy rate category, ranging between 81 and 90 percent, there are 13 States which are above the national average of 65.4 percent. The remaining 13 States and UTs are still below the national average.

Impressive as the gains are, the problem of illiteracy is far from over. There are at least seven major States with more than 15 million illiterates each, accounting for 64.81 percent of India's illiterates. Only four of them *viz.*, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan account for 42.84 percent of India's illiterates. Besides these, there are also at least four other States with illiterate populations ranging from 10 to 14 million each. The gender gap in literacy is still considerable, at 21.70 percent. Similarly, considerable efforts are required to bridge the rural-urban divide in literacy, the difference being more than 20 percent. The most acute problem, however, remains the rural female literacy, at 46.58 percent, as compared to the national average of 54.03. The literacy position among the SCs and STs is also far below the national average—literacy is 53 percent among SCs, and 49 percent among STs.

During the last decade, the literacy rate increased by about 1.3 percentage points per year. Taking into account this trend and the slight decline in population in the age group 7-14, the literacy rate is expected to go up by at least 2.6 percentage points during the two years from 2001 to 2003. It has therefore been assumed to be about 68 percent for the year 2003. The number of literates and illiterates has been calculated on the basis of population projections for 2003. The increase in the number of literates is about 4 percent per annum, while the number of illiterates reflects a declining trend.

As a result of greater efforts during 1991-2001, the average annual increase of literates during this period was about 16 million. This trend is likely to go up further during the 21st century. It has been estimated by various studies that the present literacy rate will improve to around 80 percent by the year 2015. The accelerated growth of literacy in the younger age group of 6 to 14 will move to the age group of 15 and over by the year 2015, and the declining growth rate of population in this age group at present will impact on the age group of 15-25 by that time. Thus, India can be placed in the category of countries which are likely to reach adult literacy rates of 75-90 percent by the year 2015.

In 1999, before the "Year 2000 Assessment of Education For All", and as part of the on-going realignment of approach to the literacy movement, NLM began paying special attention to some of the aspects that later came to be highlighted in the Dakar Framework for Action. These included:

- Achievement of a 75 percent literacy level by 2007.
- A multi-pronged strategy in order to address the regional, social and gender disparities in literacy.
- Refocusing the literacy, post-literacy and CE programmes to increase and strengthen women's participation, so as to bridge the gender gap in literacy.
- Encouraging PL and CE districts to pay special attention to mobilisation and organisation of women into neo-literate and self-help groups (SHGs).
- Special attention to socially disadvantaged groups like SCs/STs and women.
- Regional disparities, especially low literacy States, were identified for special attention. Forty-five districts with female literacy rates below 30 percent have been targeted for a multi-pronged strategy to improve the female literacy rates.
- An integrated approach to make the basic literacy, post-literacy and continuing education phases into a learning continuum.
- District Literacy Society, the autonomous body which implements and oversees the literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programmes, would have freedom now to use grassroots participatory networks like youth clubs, voluntary agencies and local self-government bodies as partners in CE implementation.
- Conscious of the need for administration-civil society partnership, these societies are now empowered to co-opt NGOs in the implementation of the CE programme.

- Increase in the number of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) to 122. These organisations provide non-formal vocational training to neo-literates.
- Extension of activities of JSSs which are performing well to neighbouring districts.
- Special stress on strategies to take up literacy and skill upgradation programmes for the socially disadvantaged like the SC/STs, and women in particular. Conscious of the social disabilities and acute economic problems, separate centres for SCs in their own colonies are encouraged. It is also stressed that the content of the CE programme in such areas could address issues affecting their health, quality of life and skill improvement.
- In the case of scheduled tribes, given their poverty, exploitation, ill health and their scattered habitation pattern, NLM provides a special relaxation in the matter of funds allocation. This is done so as to pay special attention to the needs of the tribals, especially females, so that it addresses regional, social and gender inequities in literacy simultaneously.

Education in India, including adult literacy and CE, is a concurrent subject and both the central and State governments are equally responsible for its development. NLM defines the broad policy contours and provides the major share of funds. But the State governments also have a commitment to EFA, and pursue the NLM objectives, according to their own resources.

On the basis of the results of the Census 2001, districts where female literacy is less than 30 percent have been identified. Forty-five such districts have already been taken up for the literacy special drive. Some States that have these low female literacy districts have started working out a multi-pronged strategy to improve their female literacy. Different States are following different strategies and methods to tackle the gender disparities in literacy. In some States, SHGs are being used as the nucleus to eradicate residual illiteracy, especially among women, and as a bridge to their increased participation in the continuing education programme. Also, a new approach of a combined literacy, post-literacy and CE programme, organised in the CE centre with suitable capacity building of motivators and a well-articulated community ownership strategy is also being taken up.

A strategy that is emerging distinctly in respect of removing gender disparities is the formation and use of women's SHGs as literacy centres. These are emerging as effective vehicles for women's mobilisation, empowerment and improvement in the PL and CE stages. There is an increasing trend of using these groups as basic units of eradication of residual illiteracy among women,

using the literates among them as the volunteers and providing training, teaching-learning material and supervision of teaching-learning progress.

The objectives of the literacy movement as they evolved over the years are broadly two-fold. One, imparting functional literacy in the initial TLC phase, its consolidation and upgradation to a self-reliant level in the post-literacy phase, and self-directed learning and its application through continuing education, towards a learning society. The second objective relates to improvement not only through the ability to apply literacy skills, but also through the upgradation of life and occupational skills. Given the short duration, the initial literacy (TLC) phase addresses mainly the literacy objective, and the improvement-oriented concerns take centrestage during post-literacy and CE stages.

The adult literacy movement initiated by NLM aims at imparting functional literacy to all non-literate adults in the 15-35 age group. But more than 60 percent of the learners have been women at the basic literacy TLC, PL as well as CE stages. Conscious of this reality, strategies of social mobilisation at the TLC stage and life-skills oriented programmes at PL and CE stages have been dovetailed to address women's needs.

The mainstream CE activities include setting up CE centres to function not only as libraries or reading rooms but also as focal points for diverse continuing education programmes, training, information, discussion, development, culture, sports, recreation and other individual interests. Besides these regular functions, the CE schemes also take up certain target-specific programmes like equivalency, quality of life improvement and income generation, depending upon local conditions, needs and resources.

In some States, there is a trend towards increasing role of the community not only in the management of activities at the CE centre, but also in the CE programmes themselves. In order to develop a sense of community ownership towards the CE programme, a system of neo-literate societies, based on membership linked to a nominal fee, has been introduced in some States. Besides this, a system of corpus fund collection is also taken up so that the community can take over and run the programme beyond the State-funded duration of five years.

7. Financing Education for All

Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to meet the target of the National Policy on Education to ensure that the outlay on education would uniformly exceed 6 percent of the national income. At present, 4.1 percent of the GNP is invested in education. The share of elementary education as a percentage of GNP in India has been relatively low, even though this has also increased by three times, from 0.48 percent to about 1.7 percent, during the last five decades.

Central expenditure on education has increased substantially over the last ten years. The central plan expenditure increased from US \$620 million in the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) to US \$1520 million in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97). Fifty percent of the enhanced allocation is to be spent on primary education. This increasing financial participation of the central government through central and centrally sponsored schemes for promotion of primary education is in keeping with the spirit of partnership between the central and State governments.

In the 1990s, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of central plan allocations made in the five-year plans for elementary education to the total outlay for education. While the proportion in the Seventh Five Year Plan was 38 percent, this was raised to 49 percent in the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97). One of the most significant factors related to change in the pattern of expenditure on education in recent years has been the gradual increase in the proportion of funds spent on elementary education in comparison to secondary and higher education sectors. The last three five-year plans have witnessed a significant shift in the expenditure of the Department of Education in the central government towards primary and adult education and away from tertiary education. This highlights the proactive role that the central government is playing towards achieving the goal of EFA.

Until recently, primary education in India was almost free from large-scale external funding. The 1990s witnessed introduction of several externally funded primary education projects, in particular the District Primary Education Programme. However, external funding of elementary education is less than 5 percent of the total expenditure by the Centre and the States on this sector. Mobilising of community resources for primary education on a larger

scale has also received considerable attention during this period, especially for improving physical infrastructure of schools.

India has consciously decided to align the planning process of EFA with the planning process of the country, which is reflected in the five-year plans. The Tenth Five Year Plan started in 2002 and would remain in operation till 2007. While formulating the goals of the Tenth Five Year Plan, it has been our endeavour to try and ensure that the requirements of the EFA goals set in Dakar are fulfilled in the Plan period itself. Accordingly, the funds requirement for EFA has been projected till 2007 only. This has been calculated sector-wise, and has then been aggregated to arrive at the total requirement of funds for EFA. The sectors covered are:

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
- Elementary Education
- Mid-day Meal in Schools
- Education of Girls and Women's empowerment
- Teacher Education
- Education of Out-of-school Youth and Adolescents
- Adult Education Programmes

The funds for early childhood care and education are available under a number of programmes for UEE. For example, SSA provides some funds per district per year for innovative interventions under ECCE. Similar components are available under other programmes like DPEP, Lok Jumbish and Mahila Samakhya. However, these programmes reflect only a small component of the entire interventions towards ECCE and funds for these have already been provided for under the respective programmes.

The main intervention towards ECCE is through the ICDS programme, which is being universalised under the Tenth Plan. The total allocation in the Tenth Plan for this programme is US \$ 2.5 billion.

The programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is the primary vehicle for achieving the Dakar goals relating to elementary education. The total requirement for UEE has been estimated as US \$ 20 billion over a ten-year period till 2010. Of this, the requirement of funds projected for the period till 2007, the target date for universalisation of primary education, is US \$ 10.6 billion, to be shared between the Centre and the States. To ensure the sustainability of this funding, the sharing pattern between the Centre and States has been modified for SSA, which breaks away from the established mould by creating a long-term financial partnership between the central and State governments. The sharing pattern between the central and State

governments would be on a 75:25 basis during the Tenth Plan and on a 50:50 basis thereafter. This arrangement ensures long-term sustainable financing, and allows greater flexibility to the States. SSA is perhaps the first programme which writes in such multi-plan funding support to the States, underscoring the importance of the EFA agenda.

The second and equally significant change is in the method of fund flows. SSA funds are being transferred directly to State implementation societies, which in turn are expected to transfer funds, along with the State share, to bank accounts maintained by village education committees (VECs), school management committees (SMCs), etc. These are responsible for expenditure on school construction and maintenance, payment of school and teacher grants, and emoluments to alternative schooling teachers (and in some cases to regular school teachers). Such decentralised structures lead to greater accountability and social auditing.

In addition to SSA, a number of other programmes, viz. DPEP, Lok Jumbish Project (LJP), Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) and Janshala would also be contributing towards UEE. These programmes have a slightly different financial sharing arrangement between the Centre and the States. While DPEP's sharing is in the ratio of 85:15 between the Centre and States, Janshala is 100 percent centrally funded. Under LJP, the Centre funds five-sixth of the costs with the States, while under SKP the sharing pattern is fifty-fifty. Based on this pattern, the total central share comes to about US \$ 8 billion out of the total Tenth Plan requirement of US \$ 10.6 billion, with the State share being US \$ 2.6 billion. Of this total Centre's share, the Planning Commission has provided US \$ 4.3 billion for the Tenth Plan period. Additional resources would be required to bridge this gap and for this, negotiations are presently taking place with external funding agencies and the Planning Commission for an additional allocation to bridge the gap.

The Government of India had launched the Mid-day Meal Scheme in all primary schools in the nineties. Earlier it was restricted to formal schools only, and the supply in most States was in the form of raw foodgrains to be taken home by children. However, the emphasis in the Tenth Plan period is to ensure that cooked food is given to all children instead of mere foodgrains and to extend this scheme to the non-formal system also. The total requirement of funds has been worked out to US \$ 3.6 billion, on the basis of an annual foodgrain requirement of 2.2 million MT for 110 million children.

The total fund requirement for the three major programmes of girls' education in the Tenth Plan is about US \$ 840 million.

Apart from the investment on quality to be made under SSA, the country would be launching another programme on teacher education. The total amount allocated for the teacher education programme is US \$ 195 million over the Tenth Plan period. Funding under this scheme will take place in two ways. First of all, funds will be allocated on the basis of State perspective plans on teacher education. This will cover funding of DIETs, CTEs, IASEs and SCERTs. Secondly, some funds will be allocated centrally for education of teacher educators and for innovations in teacher education. This will include promotion of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) under the Resource Support Programme. Universities and other resource institutions would be expected to apply to the department for these funds. National level funds will also be used for supervision and resource support of State activities, and funds have been earmarked for each State on the basis of number of students. Depending on its expenditure, a State would be able to access upto 50 percent more than the amount indicated, if funds are available. While ceilings have been kept for various activities but a State will be able to choose its own priorities.

The Working Group on adolescents, constituted by the Planning Commission for the Tenth Five Year Plan, has recommended an allocation of US \$ 23 million for the nodal ministry, i.e., the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for the Tenth Plan period. Out of this sum, US \$ 20 million have been earmarked for integrated projects covering a population of around one million adolescents over a period of five years. Separate provisions have been recommended for conducting camps for adolescents, and administration and research. In addition, UNFPA has committed US \$ 2.5 million for the scheme. Other ministries such as the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Labour, Health, and the Department of Rural Development will continue to support programmes targeting adolescents out of their own funds. The Ministry of Social Justice has also allocated US \$ 20 million for interventions related to adolescence. The total fund requirement for out-of-school youth and adolescents has been estimated at US \$ 358 million.

As per Census 2001, there are about 296 million illiterate persons in the country at present. While these are the primary target group for NLM, the scheme of continuing education targets the whole population of neo-literates and other sections of the society. The target in the Tenth Plan is to make approximately 100 million persons literate and ensure that about 100 million neo-literates do not relapse into illiteracy. Based on this, the total projections for the Tenth Plan come to US \$ 1.3 billion.

The total funds required for implementing the National Plan of Action for EFA upto 2007 has thus been estimated to be US \$ 19.5 billion.

8. Towards EFA Goals

EFA occupies the topmost priority in the national planning process. To ensure that this priority is translated into action in day-to-day activities, it has been ensured that the organisational set-up and the monitoring structure draw their authority from the highest political levels in the country. While the Prime Minister heads the National Mission for EFA, the monitoring of the progress made under the Plan is also done at the highest levels. The importance being attached to the Plan can be gauged from the fact that in the Tenth Plan, of the 11 monitorable targets fixed for the Plan period, three relate to EFA. These are:

- All children in school by 2003; all children to complete five years of schooling by 2007.
- Reduction in gender gap in literacy by at least 50 percent by 2007.
- Increase in literacy rates to 75 percent within the Plan period.

The EFA Plan would be implemented through the institutions already established for implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Wherever necessary, these institutions would be suitably modified to include elements not included under SSA at present.

In order to facilitate convergence, it is proposed to set up a National Mission with representation from all stakeholders of the programme. This would be the existing National Mission of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, with certain additional stakeholders included to take care of the greater canvas of the EFA plan. The General Council will be headed by the Prime Minister, with the Human Resource Development Minister as the Vice-Chairman. The Chairman of the Executive Committee will be the Minister for Human Resource Development. The Secretary, Department of Elementary Education and Literacy will be the Vice-Chairperson of the Executive Committee, and the Joint Secretary (Elementary Education) will be the Director General of the National Mission of Sarva Shiksha Mission and the Member Secretary of the General Council and the Executive Committee. While the individual elements of the EFA plan would be implemented by the respective line departments already working in the area, the National Mission would play a coordinating and monitoring role. This would also be the highest decision making body as far as the EFA plan is concerned.

At the State level, the State Mission Authority of SSA would be suitably expanded to make it the Mission Authority of EFA. The General Council would be headed by the Chief Minister, and the Executive Committee by the Chief Secretary/Development Commissioner/Education Secretary. Involvement of NGOs, social activists, university teachers, teacher union representatives, local body representatives, and women's groups would be ensured so as to give full transparency to the activities of the Mission.

The implementation team under EFA will work within a framework of decentralised management of education with full accountability to the community. The local body institutions and school level committees will be involved in programme implementation along with the mainstream structures.

The National Policy on Education 1986 had proposed decentralisation as a fundamental requirement for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of educational planning and management and for creating a meaningful framework for accountability, and this is central to SSA also. Several State governments have already initiated the process of decentralising the management of elementary education. New legislation has been adopted to provide for the changed framework to operate effectively. Some States have also gone for much closer collaboration and involvement of the community in decentralising the system of educational management. The country will continue to work towards the goal of decentralisation by initiating processes of community involvement and gradually shifting the locus for decision making from the State to the district level and downwards through local bodies.

This shift in planning and management strategy will also require a large effort to train and continually give support to educational bodies constituted under the local governments. There is an urgent need to reorient the outlook and role perception of government functionaries, and efforts will therefore be made to reorient the programmes of various resource institutions at national and State levels to meet these requirements. Towards this end, the local-level institutions in education and allied sectors will be strengthened adequately. Besides, it is envisaged that distance education mechanisms, suitably strengthened and reoriented, will play a significant role in the task of building capacities among personnel working at local levels.

Traditionally, planning for development of education has been done at the State government level. The National Literacy Mission changed this trend and adopted a district-level campaign mode. Following this, planning for primary education, particularly under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), has been firmly anchored at the district level. In view of

the advantages, the country proposes to adopt an integrated approach for planning at the district level for development of education. This approach will help identify districts needing more attention and varied types of inputs, thereby tackling the question of equity in an appropriate manner. Under SSA, the movement towards planning at block, cluster and village levels in partnership with NGOs is encouraged and supported. While the district will be the basic unit for educational planning, actual plans will be designed with habitations, villages and specific groups and their needs, as the primary focus. The district plan will evolve from the programmes that take into consideration the needs and educational situation of communities at the grassroots level. The government firmly believes that action to promote enrolment, retention and achievement of children must be area-based and community-specific so that problems faced at those levels are effectively addressed on the basis of empirically identified needs.

The experience of various educational programmes has taught us that community ownership and creating community demand for education is essential to the success of such programmes. Accordingly, SSA and the NLM consciously encourage community participation and ownership in the attempt to fulfil the goals of EFA. The increased involvement of the community in education also improves the quality of education, and accordingly, the following steps would be encouraged:

- Community participation in promoting enrolment, retention and other aspects of education. Local body and grassroots-level structures would become the vehicles for community mobilisation.
- A community-based monitoring system would be evolved with full transparency.
- Community mobilisation through intensive micro-planning and school mapping would be made mandatory.

With the expansion of the education system in the country, the administrative machinery has also expanded tremendously at all levels. Often, separate administrative structures are found to have a common goal and even a common set of activities, for instance in primary education, non-formal education, and adult education. The trend of creating parallel administrative machinery has led to an over-expanded bureaucratic machinery and problems of overlap, where efforts towards coordination are often counterproductive. It is against this backdrop that integrated planning and convergence would be pursued in three main areas:

- Creation of parallel structures for implementation of different development programmes will be avoided.

- Efforts will be made to re-examine the norms and patterns of operation specified under different schemes and projects to ensure greater convergence.
- State governments will be encouraged with adequate support from the Centre to reorganise education management structures so as to achieve greater coordination in planning, and effective convergence in implementation of education development programmes.

While convergence within the education sector is important, there is need for convergence among the education and other departments, particularly those which aim at providing services for improving the quality of life, housing, nutrition, family welfare, poverty alleviation, creation of opportunities for remunerative work, upgradation of returns from existing occupation, diversification of communities' occupational structures, etc. It needs to be ensured that all these impact on education, particularly in creating capacity and for creating demand for education of children.

Monitoring is envisaged as a three-tiered activity—monitoring at the local community level, at the State level and at the national level. The community, through its representative institutions like village education committees (VECs), has been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that schools are functioning effectively. Most of the qualitative impressions on school functioning can be effectively monitored only at local level and are difficult to capture either at the State level or the national level. For monitoring the qualitative aspect from the national level, reliance would be placed more on assessing the effectiveness of community-based monitoring at the local level and ensuring that this system is functioning properly. In addition, monitoring at the State and national levels would focus more on the quantitative aspect of both the status of project implementation and the progress made towards the achievement of EFA goals.

The community monitoring system would be operationalised by providing for a greater role for local self-government bodies in the district, block, village and urban areas. The general body of villagers would also be motivated towards taking an active part in the EFA processes. It is envisaged that the local level EFA plan would be placed before these bodies at the beginning of every year and the progress made against the plan would then be evaluated at the end of the year. To facilitate such an evaluation, the chief executive of the local body would have to prepare a report annually on the progress made. This would not only ensure local accountability of the field functionaries, but also enable corrective measures at the local level.

To provide a reliable database for the monitoring process, two kinds of information systems have been developed. One is the Educational Management Information System (EMIS), under which school-level data is collected every year with September 30th as the record date. This enables the measurement of a number of indicators like enrolment, gross enrolment ratio, net enrolment ratio, retention rate, dropout rate, completion rate, repetition rate, transition rate, etc. The second information system is the Project Management Information Systems (PMIS), in which the emphasis is on recording the progress made, both in physical and financial terms, towards the implementation of the perspective plans and annual plans.

The country is also conducting the Seventh All India Educational Survey, which would involve detailed collection of educational data from all habitations of the country. This would provide a baseline for the EFA process.

While continuous monitoring would be an ongoing process, this would be supplemented through sending of two supervision missions every year to the States. The supervision missions would have representatives of the Government of India and the funding agencies (if any). The supervision missions would be expected to visit individual States and look first hand at the implementation of the programme through visits to select districts of the State. The approach would be a holistic one, with emphasis on assessing both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of programme implementation. The missions are expected also to flag the areas of concern, both in programme implementation and also in the general educational scenario in the State. These areas of concern would also be the focus of monitoring till these are evaluated as suitably rectified by future supervision missions.

The task of monitoring and supervision is a mammoth one, requiring considerable effort on a continuous basis. Instead of carrying out this centrally, and having a large establishment for this purpose, professional institutions are being involved in this task. These institutions have been allocated individual States, with which they will develop long-term partnerships. They would not only carry out the task of supervision and monitoring but also act as partners of the States in the implementation of the programme. The institutions include central universities, ICSSR, university departments of education and other professional institutions having expertise in this area. The emphasis is on the institution having a competent and committed set of personnel, oriented towards carrying out similar work in the social sector. Generally, each State would have one institution attached to it, except the larger States, which may have two or three institutions attached.

The selected institution(s) would be expected to get reports on the implementation of the approved plan every quarter and send a consolidated report to the central/State government. They would also be expected to get reports on progress made in the achievement of some key outcome indicators like enrolment, out-of-school children, access to remote and unreached habitations, etc., every quarter and send a consolidated report to the central/State government. They would also make quarterly visits to select districts and make an assessment of the ground reality. And at the end of the year, they would have to calculate the specified monitoring indicators such as GER, NER, out-of-school children, dropout rate, completion rate, transition rate, repetition rate, etc.

Apart from these activities, the institutions would also be expected to carry out/coordinate research studies pertaining to the areas of concern in the States. These studies would be expected to identify the reasons for some of the problems encountered in the field and suggest solutions to tackle the same. They may also be in the nature of evaluation or impact studies to assess the effectiveness of any specific intervention. At the national level, the institutions would be coordinated by national institutions like NIEPA and NCERT.

In addition to the use of institutions for intensive supervision and monitoring, the country would also be using the services of independent auditors for concurrent auditing and financial monitoring. This is in addition to the requirements of statutory audit.

The Real Challenge is not of Numbers

Basic education continues to remain our best hope for the development of the poor and marginalised. The Dakar Framework provides a roadmap for this development, and we are well on our way to planning for the milestones that it sets. While the challenges before us are no doubt daunting, we are confident that we can overcome them through proper implementation of the many ambitious programmes that we have prepared.

Education is far more than the mere mechanics of reading and writing. It has implications for governance, for freedom and for democracy, and in any democratic society therefore, true freedom comes only with education. Mahatma Gandhi believed that "...what is really needed to make democracy function is not knowledge of facts, but right education". These sentiments remain as true today as they were when expressed by Gandhi, and we look forward to the day, not very far, when we have achieved education for all.