

DRAFT

**Recommendations of the National Advisory Council
for provision of universal access to quality education through
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.**

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The purpose of this document is NOT to review the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The SSA document is quite comprehensive, although we are suggesting some modifications. Much progress has been made over the last two years under SSA and for a decade before than under various programs. Obviously much more needs to be done. Yet, considering that there is a deadline to meet, there is a need to put all efforts in high gear. As is often observed in our country, the gap between policy and practice, intent and execution is huge. It is commonly accepted now that the government alone cannot fulfill the promise of education, and that participation, empowerment of people is important. While policies and laws can create a framework and an enabling environment, the power structures of the society cannot be changed unless people are organized and assisted to wield the power to achieve what they must. No document can be written that will substitute energizing and activation of people on the ground. There is no substitute to releasing the creative energies of people both inside and outside the system so that local solutions can be found to suit the context. If we want to seriously achieve universal elementary education over the next five and a quarter years, there is no choice but to activate people from all sections of the society and in the remotest areas of the country. There is a need to think outside the box because thinking within the box has not led us very far. There is a need for flexibility which is discouraged by 'norms' although it must be conceded that they are needed for discipline.

The Government of India must make a beginning by making a firm financial commitment, which has been lacking so far. The introduction of the cess on central taxes has raised expectations for effective, efficient, and transparent utilization of funds. This one major step forward requires that the forward march should continue in the same spirit.

There are several major issues of education that need to be addressed with a sense of urgency. Equity issues, which are also important to the SSA, are foremost among them. Content and delivery of education, and the meaning of 'quality' have been discussed and policies prepared. But the fruits of these have barely reached the children in villages and urban slums. It is not a question of intent, although that often becomes an issue when education in the real sense, the basic tool for equity and equal opportunity, is denied. The problem of education is first and foremost a socio-political problem, which leads to all other issues. It has to be recognized as such and dealt with in accordance through people's mobilization.

A Mission in which government, civil society, and people act together to achieve the set goal within the deadline is one way of signaling that we are ready to address the socio-political problems.

The following note touches upon some broad features and is not intended to go into details of each although in some places these may have been touched. Separate notes are being prepared for the mid-day meal program, the aanganwadi program, and about financial allocations. A note touching upon some long-term broad issues of education is also being prepared separately.

We are aware that the Central Advisory Board for Education has set up committees to go into several issues including the Central Act for free and compulsory education. These issues or details of these issues are not a subject of this note.

1. Making Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan an outcome oriented mission to meet the deadline:

The nation has committed itself to achieving universal elementary education by 2010. The broad goals are:

- 1.1. All children in school, or education guarantee centers, alternative schools, and back to school camps by 2003
- 1.2. All children complete four years of primary education by 2007
- 1.3. All children complete eight years of elementary education by 2010.
- 1.4. Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
- 1.5. Bridge all social and gender gaps at the primary stage by 2007 and elementary stage by 2010.
- 1.6. Universal retention by 2010

Purposeful and creative planning of all resources- financial, technical, managerial- to actually meet the deadline and monitor progress towards this deadline is necessary. **This will mean reorganizing work in a mission mode.**

Additional two clear objectives will be added:

- 1.7 Ensure that all children learn in four/eight years of schooling at least learning achievements expected of std IV by 2007, and std VIII by 2010.**
- 1.8 Prepare grounds by 2010 for extension of the fundamental right to education up to age 16 by 2015**

2. Mission Objectives: In order to meet the deadline of 2010, the following will be the mission objectives:

2.1. Legal Framework: Legal framework, including creation of a Central Act and State acts consistent with it; modification of all acts relevant to children including the Child Labor Act, the Juvenile Justice Act, and other acts which may have implications to children's full time enrollment, attendance, learning, and completion of at least eight years in school, will be in place by 2007.

2.2. Financial Provision: The Government of India will ensure that funds needed to meet the deadline of universal elementary education are provided with timely release of its share provided the states also ensure timely recruitment of teachers, regular functioning of schools and achievement of prescribed learning levels by children.

2.3. Provision of classrooms: All requirements of classrooms for std I-VIII will be met by 2007 in all states. Priority will be given to the provision of std I-V classroom requirements and states which do not have this infrastructure will be first encouraged to complete the task within the deadline.

2.4. Teacher recruitment and training: All teacher appointments for std I-VIII will be completed by 2007. Those appointed without sufficient pre-service training will be trained through Open University and/or other mechanisms. The State Governments will take policy decisions to ensure:

2.4.1. setting up of recruiting policies and institutions of teacher training so that there is no dearth of trained teachers at any district in the future. The structures of DIETS and Cluster Schools/ Cluster Resource Centers are in place in most states. However, their effectiveness as academic leaders needs to be improved to achieve the desired results. DIETS and Cluster Resource Centers

will be held accountable for learning achievements of the children and performance of the teachers.

2.4.2. to ensure accountability of SCERTs, DIETS, and Cluster Resource Centers with respect to learning achievement of children and performance of the teachers.

2.4.3. to merge functions of training and academic monitoring so that trainers are not only responsible for training, but also the outcome of the training

2.5. **Pre-school education:** Although ICDS is the main program for early childhood care and education, it is observed that the educational component in the Aangawadis is very weak or non-existent. As the expenditure on civil construction diminishes, and as more funds become available for education through increased spending as a portion of GDP, one year of pre-school education attached to each school will be introduced in a phased manner beginning with the backward districts.

2.6. **Creating capacities of planning and management:** Planning and management ability at the district and the sub-district level will be strengthened. This may be done through collaboration with institutions of management. Such institutions will be encouraged to start courses in education management, which will be pre-requisites for any person made responsible for administration and/or management. Each state shall have a State Institute for Education Management by 2007. Such institutes will function in collaboration with an institute of management of repute, which will contribute to the course design and execution.

In the interim: a volunteer core will be created which will be made up of management students, graduates of management, young professionals, other capable educated individuals who want to volunteer their services for a period of 1-2 years. This core will assist each district to plan and manage the SSA-led program in each state.

2.7. Monitoring and assessment:

2.7.1. Central- external, independent: regular, transparent monitoring and assessment of schools- including learning achievement and expenditure -will be institutionalized through an independent agency set up for the purpose and 'Status of Education Reports for each district, and state will be made public in a manner that is understandable to the 'aam aadmi'. Each body of elected representatives will set aside one day in a year to discuss the report.

2.7.2. Village level 'school report card': The village education committees and/or panchayats in rural areas, and parent-teacher associations or appropriate school committees in urban areas will maintain 'school report cards' with a simple set of indicators including learning achievement, days of school functioning, availability of teachers etc. The 'school report card' will be discussed in the 'gram sabha' in rural areas or parent-teacher meeting in urban areas once in three months.

2.8. People's participation- integrated campaigns to create 'extended school network' to bridge social gaps:

One of the main differences between education of the children of socially advanced groups and those of the poor, socially backward groups of people is that the upper income, educated families are able to provide learning support to their children at home. The children of upper classes and castes live in a literate environment that is not available to the poorer children. The social and knowledge gap between the school and the home is vast. Apart from complete administration-bureaucracy orientation of the school system, such gaps are responsible for poor functioning and performance of the schools. In order to bridge these gaps, the following activities will be planned around each school with the school acting as a social networking center. It is not expected that the school teachers perform

these tasks. However, the Village Education Committee and/or the parent-teacher association in urban areas will be the body supervising and coordinating the work in each village:

2.8.1. Capacity building and activation of local

governments, education committees: The SSA requires planning to start at the village with participation of the people. Often this is not the case. There is a need to not just train, but to work with village education committees and panchayats, even gram sabhas on a regular basis so that regular functioning of the school is possible.

2.8.2. Adult literacy: Starting with parents, especially

mothers, of school age children, all 15-35 age group persons will be made literate through voluntary program of the National Literacy Mission, which functions within the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy.

2.8.3. Popularization of Science, exploration of

surroundings, relevant education: Each village/ slum community will have a voluntary group of youth who will be trained in simple scientific activities starting with observation, recording, and exploration of the surroundings and knowledge base of the region (e.g. local biodiversity, water resources, soil, topography, history) to activities related to simple principles of geometry, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, health-nutrition, keeping in mind the local context. Children will be involved in these activities by the group. Local skills such as weaving, pottery, performing arts also will be integrated into the study activities. These activities are expected to raise the local resources for teaching-learning at the higher levels and also help teachers make their teaching more relevant.

2.8.4. A library in every village and promotion of reading among children and writing for children: The situation regarding good quality, inexpensive Indian language books is pathetic for a country of a billion plus people. Here again, the social and knowledge gap is huge. A country of such beauty, diversity, and traditions falls extremely short of communicating it to the children. There is a need to promote writing for children beginning with collection of traditional nursery rhymes and poems known in villages, graded reading for children, and going on to production of non-fiction books that bring to the child nature and science. Apart from books in the school library, libraries and retail selling of books need to be promoted in a big way. This can be done through self-help-groups in villages, or even retail networks of public sector banks or oil companies. The country should aim at every child being able to read 50 new, age-appropriate books every year by 2010.

2.8.5. Anti-child labor Campaigns: It has been amply demonstrated that children are sent to work not just because they need to support the family. Child labor is a direct consequence of the failure of the system of education and societal neglect of the poor. There is enough evidence that 'opportunities' of employment provided by employers in the farming and unorganized industry, not to speak of feudal practices of bonded labor, cause the children to go to work where schools fail to deliver good education. This becomes an alternative to a boring and ineffective education. Education is a fundamental right of the child, and hence ensuring that the child secures education is the responsibility of the state and the society. However, the society tolerates child labor at various levels and does not find it unacceptable. There is a need for patient and persuasive work coupled with legal deterrent at every village to change attitudes

and to create conditions so that parents and villagers themselves create a new culture where sending children to work for wages is stopped. 'Employers' need to be engaged persuasively while also creating legal frameworks that will discourage employment of children at the cost of good education. Every district plan will have a necessary component of an anti-child labor campaign. NGOs experienced in this work will be given charge of handling the campaigns.

2.8.6. Education of the physically and mentally

challenged children. The care and education of the physically and mentally challenged children is a multi-dimensional problem. While education policies have always promoted the idea of integrating these children with the mainstream, the governmental system is not likely to be sensitive enough to handle the issues effectively. Therefore a separate Council of experts and practitioners will be created within the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to prepare schemes and programs to address issues of the physically and mentally challenged children and to oversee their implementation.

3. Structuring the mission: Programs that are completely government controlled have a tendency to get bureaucratized and ineffective especially when they require creativity. The mission should have three clear arms of functioning which will function in coordination but with clear mandates and separate governing structures.

3.1. Three arms of the mission: The Mission organization will create interfaces of government, institutions of higher learning, and NGO/ movements, people's organizations at all levels. The three sectors will be charged with responsibilities and the authority to achieve specific mission objectives in collaboration with existing state agencies or independently as the case may be.

- 3.1.1. **Provision and regular functioning of schools:** Union/
State/ District Government: Main responsibility for mission
objectives **5.1** through **5.5**
- 3.1.2. **Campaigns and Capacity building:** Civil society sector:
NGOs, movements, people's organizations, Foundations,
Institutions of higher learning, corporates: Objectives **5.6, 5.7**
and **5.8**
- 3.1.3. **Assessment and Monitoring:** Local governments and
agency for independent assessment/ evaluation : Monitor
functioning of schools including learning achievements.

4. Planning to meet the deadline objectives:

4.1.1. An overall strategic plan for 2005-10 should be prepared for each district. This plan may have three broad stages:

- **Transition stage**
- **Take off stage**
- **Universal elementary education stage**

4.1.2. Transition Stage (no more than 3 years for each district):

This stage implies that a school, a block, a district, or a state is not fully prepared to deliver 'quality education' to all children enrolled and retained up to std V due to lack of

- Proper classrooms and teaching learning equipment.
- Teachers –or properly trained teachers
- Ability of the existing teachers to deliver the minimum expected age-appropriate learning achievement up to std V.
- Retention of all children up to completion of std V at least.

During the transition stage the above weaknesses will be overcome through planned action, including use of transient programs and mechanisms so that within three years or less, every school, block, district, or state can move into the take off stage of delivering upper primary education for all.

4.1.3. Take off stage (no more than 2 years): During this stage all schools, blocks, districts, and states will be able to meet the following criteria up to std VIII:

- Provision of requisite infrastructure including classrooms and trained teachers (even if they were originally recruited as 'para' teachers)
- Enrollment and regular school attendance of all children in the habitation up to std VIII
- Ability of the existing teachers to deliver the minimum expected age-appropriate learning achievement up to std VIII

- Retention of all children at least up to std VIII
- One year of pre-school education in all schools

4.1.4. Universal elementary education stage: This stage, during which gains of the previous stages are sustained and the state looks forward to extending universalization up to grade X, must be reached by every state at least by 2010.

- 4.2. Each district should prepare a timeline for attainment of different stages of universal elementary education including the sub goals and performance of each district should be evaluated against the set timelines.

5. Review financial norms under SSA and introduce flexibility in planning and execution linked to time-bound deliverables:

The SSA document is a comprehensive one which is expected to encourage flexibility in planning. However, in actual practice planning at districts and states is extremely straight jacketed. This is partly due to poor planning ability at the district level and partly due to the section on 'financial norms'. There is a need to move away from the thinking that 'norms' somehow enforce efficiency or discipline. In a system where external assessment, monitoring exists along with defined time-bound deliverables, checks and balances can be created and performance can be measured to bring discipline, efficiency, and effectiveness.

6. Setting up a separate structure and to deal with problems of urban education

- 6.1. According to the 2001 census 27.8% India lives in urban areas. A large proportion of these are the urban poor. Historically, all governmental schemes in the development sector have been based entirely on the rural issues. In the bargain the urban poor have been

neglected except in cities, which have a tradition of good administration.

- 6.2. Education for the urban poor, contrary to popular belief, is in worse shape in most regions than in the rural areas. In fact, even in relatively better served metros such as Mumbai, there are pockets of utter neglect. Also, thanks to issues of governance, the municipal bodies are either rendered powerless or are inactive. There also are complications arising out of the existence in relatively large numbers of street children, child laborers, children of commercial sex workers, children in conflict with law. These are the most vulnerable children with very specific issues. Their problems cannot be dealt with using the general strategies applicable to the mainstream population. Convergence of several departments is critically needed to solve problems and **a separate scheme of assistance with different norms is needed for NGOs to work with these children.**

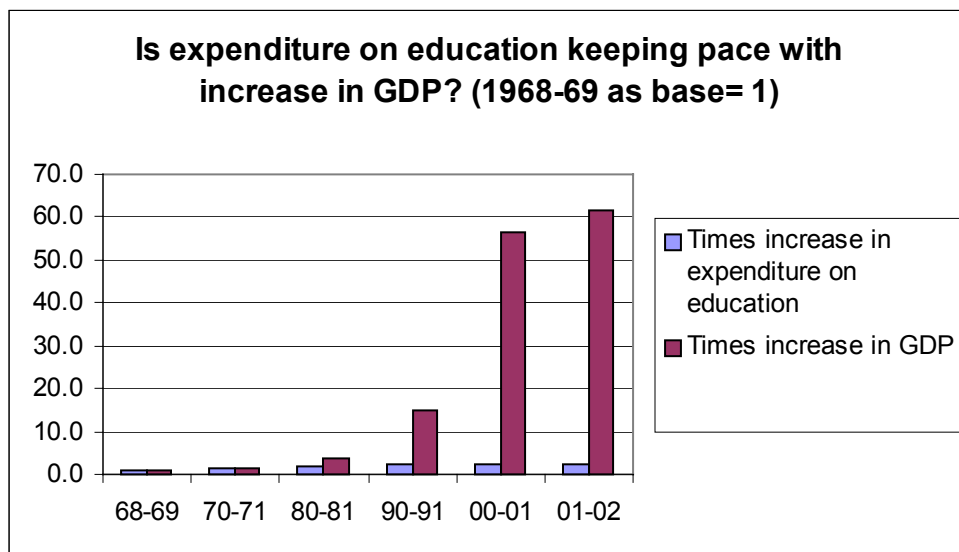
7. Setting up district-level replicable pilots to demonstrate effective universal elementary education:

One of the major obstacles in making rapid advances is that administrators, practitioners, and policy-makers are not convinced that rapid progress is possible. This is especially true of tribal and remote districts or regions that have been stagnant for a decade or more. Hence, the outcome oriented approach with the suggested new elements may be seen as complex and difficult to execute. However, the Union Government, could work with the states to create replicable district models. It should be possible to enlist support of NGOs and other civil society organizations to create such models in collaboration with the Zilla Panchayat and the district administration.

8. Financial commitment of the Government of India:

8.1. A separate note on the financial provision is attached to this document.

8.2. The Government of India should project the year by which public expenditure will reach 6% of GDP. The goal to raise public expenditure on education to 6% in stages was first articulated in 1968. The GDP has increased 61 fold since then till 2002, but the public expenditure has increased from 1.68% to only 4.02% by 2002¹.



9. Universalization of the aanganwadi and mid-day meal

programs: Separate notes are being submitted on the two subjects.

The aanganwadi program is not to be taken as an early childhood 'education' program. A separate pre-school education program is required as indicated in an earlier section.

¹ Based on Department of Education, GOI figures. 2002 figures are provisional.