

Key Components of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in India

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Abstract – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is an effort to universalize elementary education through community-ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. It is an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities of all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode. It forms the cornerstone of government interventions in the sphere of elementary education for all children. It was launched in November 2000 as an umbrella programme to support and build on primary and elementary education projects. The programme aims to ensure five years of primary education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years by 2007 and eight years of schooling by 2010.

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INTRODUCTION

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan evolved from the recommendations of the state education minister's conference held in October 1998 to pursue universalization of elementary education in a mission mode. The assistance under the programme involved a sharing arrangement between the central and the state government, on 85:15 basis during the Ninth Plan, at 75:25 during the Tenth Plan and 50:50 thereafter. The programme covers the entire country (except the state of Goa) with a special focus on educational needs of girls, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other children in difficult circumstances.

In this paper gives an overview of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. It contains the background, features, aims, objectives and programme implementation. It also deals with the central interventions, monitoring of the programme, coverage of special focus groups, quality issues in elementary education and improvement of school facilities. Since the present it deals with the policy provisions in implementing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the contents discussed in this chapter are taken mainly based on the document: 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Framework for Implementation'.

FEATURES OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a Hindi phrase which means "Education Programme to All". This programme is time bound and aims at quality

education. The target beneficiaries in the community and other stakeholders are involved in all stages of implementation to achieve the education outcomes. In overall Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is understood in the following manner. It is:

- a) A programme with a clear time frame for universal elementary education.
- b) A response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country.
- c) An opportunity for promoting social justice through basic education.
- d) An effort at effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum level Education Committees, Parents Teachers Associations, Mother Teacher Associations, Tribal Autonomous Councils and other grassroots level structures in the management of elementary schools.
- e) An expression of political will for universal elementary education across the country.
- f) A partnership between the central, state and the local government.

- g) An opportunity for states to develop their own vision of elementary education

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

The aim of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010.

The other goal is to bridge social, regional and gender gaps, with the active participation of the community in the management of schools.

Its aim is also to allow children to learn about and master their natural environment. The objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are; a) all children should be enrolled in school by 2003, b) all children should complete five years of primary education by 2007, c) all children should complete eight years of elementary education by 2010, d) focus on quality of elementary education, e) bridge all gender and social category-gaps at primary education by 2007 and at elementary education by 2010, and f) universal retention be achieved by 2010.

Framework for Implementation

The framework of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan; a) allow states to formulate context specific guidelines within the overall framework; b) encourage districts in states and UTs to reflect local specificity; c) promote local need based and planning based on broad national policy norms; and d) make planning a realistic exercise by adopting broad national norms.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan as a Framework and as a Programme

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has two aspects; i) it provides a wide convergent framework for implementation of elementary education schemes; ii) it is also a programme with budget provision for strengthening vital areas to achieve universalization of elementary education. As a programme, it reflects the additional resource provision for the purpose.

Broad Strategies of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Programme

Since community participation is one of the broad strategies in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, it has to be ensured in the governance of the primary schooling system. In this context it is said that parents of primary school going children are given a role in improving the inspection system and the functioning of primary schools. Formation of parent-teacher committees in every primary school with legal powers to make school grants conditional on the approval of these committees is likely to be a positive step forward for making primary schools accountable. Keeping this idea of community

participation in view, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is made a strategic programme for universalisation of elementary education in India. The programme has various strategies for community participation, village level planning, institutional reforms and financing. The programme also has a special focus on education for tribals, girls etc.

Institutional Reforms:

As part of the SSA, the central and the state governments undertook reforms in order to improve efficiency of the delivery system. The states made an objective assessment of their prevalent education system including educational administration, achievement levels in schools, financial issues, decentralization and community ownership, review of State Education Act, rationalization of teacher deployment and recruitment of teachers, monitoring and evaluation, status of education of girls, SC/ST and disadvantaged groups.

Sustainable Financing:

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is based on the premise that financing of elementary education interventions has to be sustainable. This calls for a long-term perspective on financial partnership between the central and the state governments.

Community Ownership:

The programme calls for community ownership of school-based interventions through effective decentralization. This is augmented through involvement of women's groups, Village Education Committee (VEC) members and members of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI).

Institutional Capacity Building:

The SSA conceives a major capacity building role for national, state and district level institutions like National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). Improvement in quality requires a sustainable support system of resource persons and institutions.

Community Based Monitoring with Full Transparency:

The programme has a community based monitoring system. The Educational Management Information System (EMIS) correlates school level data with community-based information from micro planning and surveys. Besides this, every school is

encouraged to share all information with the community, including grants received.

Habitation as a Unit of Planning:

The SSA works on a community based approach to planning with habitation as a unit of planning. Habitation plans are the basis for formulating district plans.

Accountability to Community:

SSA envisages cooperation between teachers, parents and PRI members, as well as accountability and transparency to the community.

Priority to Education of Girls:

Education of girls, especially those belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and minorities, are one of the principal concerns in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Focus on Special Groups:

The focus on the inclusion and participation of children from SC/ST, minority groups, urban deprived children, disadvantaged groups and the children with special needs, in the educational process.

Pre-Project Phase:

SSA commenced throughout the country with a well-planned pre-project phase that provides for a large number of interventions for capacity development to improve the delivery and monitoring system. These include provisions for household survey, community-based micro planning, school mapping, training of community leaders, school level activities, support for setting up information system, office equipment, diagnostic studies, etc.,

Thrust on Quality:

SSA lays a special thrust on making education at the elementary level useful and relevant for children by improving the curriculum, child centered activities and effective teaching learning strategies.

Role of Teachers:

SSA recognizes the critical and central role of teachers and advocates a focus on their development needs. Setting up of Mandal Resource Centres/Cluster Resource Centres, recruitment of qualified teachers, opportunities for teacher development through participation in curriculum related material development, focus on classroom process and exposure visits for teachers are all designed to develop the human resource among teachers.

District Elementary Education Plans:

As per the SSA framework, each district has to prepare a district elementary education plan reflecting all the investments being made and required in the elementary education sector, with a holistic and convergent approach. There is a perspective plan which gives a framework of activities over a longer time frame to achieve UEE. There is also an Annual Work Plan (AWP) and budget that helps in listing the prioritized activities to be carried out in that year. The perspective plan will also be a dynamic document subject to constant improvement in the course of programme implementation.

Education in Tribal Areas:

SSA emphasized and strongly recommended for the development of education in the tribal areas. While emphasizing special attention to the children belonging to Scheduled Caste, girls, minorities, Schedule Tribe were also a focused group in the entire programme. Infrastructure development, appointing qualified teachers, ensuring accessibility for education, enrolment, retention are some of the provisions made in the programme for the children belonging to the Scheduled Tribe communities.

Public and Private Partnership (PPP) in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan takes note of the fact that provision of elementary education is largely made by the government and government aided schools. There are also private unaided schools in many parts of the country that provide elementary education. Poorer households are not able to afford the fees charged in private schools in many parts of the country. There are also private schools that charge relatively modest fees and where poorer children also attend. Some of these schools are marked by poor infrastructure and low paid teachers. While encouraging all efforts at equity and 'access to all' in well-endowed private unaided schools, efforts to explore areas of public-private partnership are envisaged. Government, local body, and government aided schools are covered under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, as is the practice under the mid-day meal scheme and DPEP. In the framework it is said that in case private sector wishes to improve the functioning of a government, local body or a private aided school, efforts to develop a partnership is to be made within the broad parameters of state policy in this regard. Depending on the state policies, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) and other government teacher training institutes could be used to provide resource support to private unaided institutions, if the additional costs are to be met by these private bodies.

Financial Norms and Provisions under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

The financial norms under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan are; a) the assistance under the programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is on a 85:15 sharing arrangement during the IX Plan, 75:25 sharing arrangement during the X Plan, and 50:50 sharing thereafter between the central government and state governments, b) the Government of India releases funds to the state governments/UT (Union Territory) only and installments (except first) to be released after the previous installments of central government and state share has been transferred to the State Implementation Society, c) the National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meal) remains a distinct intervention with food grains and specified transportation costs being met by the centre and the cost of cooked meals being met by the state government, d) all funds to be used for up gradation, maintenance, repair of schools and teaching learning equipment and local management to be transferred to VECs/ School Management Committees/ Gram Panchayat/ or any other village/ school level arrangement for decentralization adopted by that particular state/UT. The village/ school based body may make a resolution regarding the best way of procurement, and other incentive schemes like distribution of scholarships and uniforms is continued to be funded under the state plan. They are not funded under the SSA programme.

Regarding teacher pupil ratio, one teacher for every 40 children in primary and upper primary school, at least two teachers in a primary school and one teacher for every class in the upper primary schools are given. It is also ensured that within one kilometer of every habitation the school would be made accessible to the children. Regarding facilities to the teachers, provisions like a separate room for every teacher in primary and upper primary schools and two class rooms with verandah to every primary school with at least two teachers is also mentioned in the programme.

Free text books are provided to all the children belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at primary and upper primary level within an upper ceiling of Rs. 150/- per child. For maintenance and repair of school buildings, it is carried through school management committees/Village Education Committees. It also involves community contribution. All the expenditure regarding school related procurement involves the acceptance of teachers as well as parents in the committee. VEC/ school-village level appropriate body is to decide on best mode of procurement and requirement of successful running of schools.

Regarding school grants, Rs.2,000/- per year per primary/upper primary school for replacement of non-functional school equipment is provided. Rs. 500/-

per teacher per year in primary and upper primary schools is also provided under teacher grant.

Regarding interventions for out of school children in un-served habitations other alternative schooling models like Bridge Courses and Back-to-School Camps is also provided for enhancing enrolment of the children. Particularly for ensuring community participation and micro planning is also provided as per specific proposal of a district, duly recommended by the state.

Planning, Appraisal and Fund Flows under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Preparatory Activities

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan assigned greatest importance to the preparatory activities as these have been conceived as a necessary condition for quality implementation of the programme. Systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making are part of the preparatory activities. Setting up of an effective information system has therefore been highlighted, besides procurement of essential office equipment and computer hardware. However, the framework points out that involving community leaders at all levels and orienting existing governmental functionaries in carrying out their activities more effectively is more important than the hardware component.

The preparation of habitation level educational plans through effective community mobilization for micro planning and school mapping is the greatest challenge of the preparatory phase. Since Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has the clear aim of Universalization of Elementary Education, it is mandatory to track the progress of each and every child in the 0-14 age group. Preparation of Village Education Registers (VER) on the basis of household survey, regular monitoring through retention registers and pupil progress cards are developed in the preparatory phase itself. This calls for a focus on capacity building among the Panchayati Raj Institutions, members of Village Education Committees, School Management Committees, Parent Teacher Associations, etc. The preparatory phase provides for a process and activity based constitution/organization of such committees and training of community leaders for better management of schools. Capacity building in the local community requires a constant interface with the school and the teachers and this is attempted through a large number of school-based activities in the preparatory phase itself.

Coverage of Special Focus Groups

Education for Girls, Scheduled Caste and Tribal Children

Recent assessments show that girls' participation in schooling has improved significantly during the last 10-15 years. Education of girls, especially those belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, becomes the primary focus in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Efforts are made to mainstream gender concerns in all the activities under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan recognizes the need for special efforts to bring the out of schoolgirls, especially from disadvantaged sections, to school. This requires a proper identification of girls who are out of school in the course of micro planning. It also calls for involving women through participatory processes in the effective management of schools. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is committed to making these interventions possible. States have been sensitized on the use of available data for local level planning for girls' education with community involvement. Field based trainings have been conducted in Assam, Kerala, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. States have been building on these skills and are concentrating in certain very deprived pockets. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu have also initiated focused interventions along similar lines.

The educational development of children belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is a special focus in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Every activity under the project has to identify the benefit that ensures to children from these communities. Many of the incentive schemes have a sharper focus on children from these communities. The participation of dalits and tribals in the affairs of the school is especially encouraged to ensure ownership of the *Abhiyan* by all social groups, especially the most disadvantaged.

The interventions for children belonging to SC/ST communities are based on the intensive micro planning addressing the needs of every child. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan provides flexibility to local units to develop a context specific intervention. Some interventions like engagement of community organizers from SC/ST communities with a focus on schooling needs of children from specific households, special teaching support as per need, ensuring sense of ownership of school committees by SC/ST communities, training programmes for motivation for schooling, setting up alternative schooling facilities in un served habitations and for other out of school children, using community teachers, monitoring attendance and retention of children from weaker sections regularly, and involving community leaders in school management.

Education for Children with Special Needs

SSA ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided education in an appropriate environment. SSA adopts zero projection policy so that no child is left out of the education system. The thrust of SSA is on providing integrated and inclusive education to all children with special needs in general schools. It supports a wide range of approaches, options and strategies for education of children with special needs. This includes education through open learning system and open schools, non-formal and alternative schooling, distance education and learning and special schools, wherever necessary.

Strategies for Out-Of-School Children

The Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) scheme is a part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan framework. The management structure for implementation of EGS and AIE are incorporated in the management structure of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The new scheme makes provision for diversified strategies and has flexible financial parameters. It has provided a range of options, such as EGS, Back to School Camps, *Balika Shibiras*, etc. There are four broad focus areas in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan like, 1) full time community schools for small un served habitations, 2) mainstreaming of children through bridge courses of different duration, 3) specific strategies for special groups like child labour, street children, adolescent girls, girls belonging to certain backward communities, children of migrating families, etc. and 4) innovative programmes - the innovations can be in the areas of pedagogic practices, curriculum, programme management, textbooks and Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs), etc.

All habitations not having a primary school within one kilometer and having a minimum of school age children are entitled to have an EGS type school. Children who have dropped out of school have an opportunity to avail of bridge courses, aimed at their mainstreaming. The objective is to see the EGS and AIE as integral to the quest of UEE.

Quality Issues in Elementary Education: The National Policy Resolve

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan makes efforts to take a holistic and comprehensive approach to the issue of quality. Efforts to decentralize the whole process of curriculum development down (grass root level) to the district level are made. Reducing the load of non-comprehension by facilitating child centered and activity based learning is attempted. Learning by doing, learning by observation, work experience, art, music, sports and value education is made fully integral to the learning process. Appropriate

changes made in the evaluation system to make it more continuous and less threatening. Performance of children is constantly monitored in consultation with parents. Teacher's role in preparation of textbooks and secondary learning materials are enhanced. School timings are made contextual.

Teacher Recruitment, Rationalization and Management

States have their own norms for recruitment of teachers and a lot of diversity exists in payments being made to new recruits. In many cases the appointing authority is the local panchayats. The states are free to follow their own norms as long as these are consistent with the norms established by National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE). There is no compromise on standards even though payments of less than the state pay scale as an interim measure may be adopted in states with large scale vacancies. The programme provides for primary and upper primary school teachers to ensure that there are no single teacher schools. Overall, the effort is to provide at least 1: 40 teacher pupil ratio. Qualifications of upper primary teachers are as per state specific norms and the number of upper primary schools is broadly as per the national policy norm. The practice of at least 50 percent of women teachers is strictly followed. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan encourages decentralized management of teacher cadres. The local government recruits and the community have a say in the selection process. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan improved the accountability of the teacher *vis-a-vis* local community without diluting the standards for selection of teachers, as laid down from time to time by the NCTE.

Useful and Relevant Education and Education for Life

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan encourages states to focus on total development of children, giving encouragement to sports, cultural activities, project work involving interaction with social and natural surroundings, activity based learning, exposure to life skills with regard to health, nutrition, professions, etc. Such a focus is looking upon a school as a social institution that is the hub of community activities.

Improvement of School Facilities and other Civil Works

Community participation is the only means of undertaking any civil works in the improvement of school facilities. Experiments in community participation under *Lok Jumbish* and under DPEP in many states had been very encouraging and such experiments are further carried out. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is first of all tried to mobilize resources under Rural Employment Programme (REP) and other developmental schemes for constructing school buildings. The community is to come forward to maintain school facilities if any

investment is proposed in a village. An annual support to the community for repair and maintenance is envisaged under the SSA.

With the elementary education becoming an obligation of the state (including the local government), the panchayats are directed to prioritize construction of school facilities where it does not exist. The participation of the community in all civil work activities is mandatory in order to ensure a sense of ownership and a departure from contractor driven approaches. School Management Committees/ Village Education Committees/ Gram Panchayat Committee on Education have to carry out the civil works activities through a transparent system of account keeping. The DPEP and *Lok Jumbish* Project had developed effective community based approaches for civil works. As per the policy framework these are mandatory in all Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan districts.

The principle of social audit could be accepted for minor repairs. The School Management Committee/ Village Education Committee could certify the maintenance and repair work undertaken in a school. For larger repair and maintenance as well as new construction, technical provisions are followed. New building designs developed in *Lok Jumbish* and DPEP are adapted to promote child centered learning. Use of local materials and cost effective technologies is encouraged. A civil works innovation fund is set up in each state/UT to encourage experimentation with design. Repair and maintenance of buildings is given the top most priority in the policy framework.

It is seen from the above discussion that one of the thrust areas of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is the empowerment of community and enhancing the community participation in school related activities to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education in all the social groups including Scheduled Tribes in India. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan completed the first phase of its implementation by 2007. With this background, the researcher made an attempt to find out its impact on community participation in primary education in the rural areas in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. The responses of community participation in school related activities are presented in the paper.

CONCLUSION:

The Present study reveals that the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme aims to ensure elementary education for all including five years of primary education and eight years of schooling for all children. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan focuses on community ownership and the village education plans proposed in construction with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The central focus in the implementation of the programme is community ownership and their participation in school related

activities to bring more relevance in the field of primary education.

Therefore, the policy framework strongly suggested for greater involvement of community in all the areas of programme implementation. Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan community participation is an important component at village level that the community has to be involved in education planning and mobilization process at the school level. To achieve its objective of UEE, the programme calls for public-private partnership. The programme has given importance to the involvement of NGOs in the area of community mobilization. This programme has also allocated huge funds for constructing school buildings and improvement of school facilities.

It is also observed that the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan framework ensured that the community has the prime responsibility in the finance related decision-making at the school level. On the whole, the discussion in this chapter reveals that community ownership and their participation is an important aspect to achieve universalization of primary education. The next chapters deal with the profile of the study area, implementation of the programme in the study area, the socio-economic background of the respondents and their awareness and perception as to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme details to analyze the ground realities in the implementation of the programme.

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