

Education

10.15 The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, as modified in 1992, emphasises three aspects in relation to elementary education:

- universal access and enrolment,
- universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, and
- a substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning.

NPE emphasises that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women, and in securing a rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities. Government is firmly committed to providing education for all, the priority areas being free and compulsory elementary education, covering children with special needs, eradication of illiteracy, education for women's equality, and special focus on the education of SCs/STs and Minorities.

10.16 NPE 1986 had set a goal of expenditure on education of 6 per cent of the GDP. As against this target, the combined total expenditure on education by Central and State Governments was 3.49 per cent of GDP in 2004-05 (BE). Central Plan Allocation for education was increased from Rs.8,225 crore in 2004-05 (BE) to Rs. 15,244 crore in 2005-06 (BE), with Rs.12,242 crore for elementary education, Rs. 290 crore for adult education and Rs.2,712 crore for secondary and higher education.

Elementary Education

10.17 Allocation for elementary education in the Tenth Five Year Plan period (2002-07) at Rs.28,750 crore is 75 per cent higher than the allocation in the Ninth Plan. Resources for elementary education have been augmented through imposition of the education cess at the rate of 2 per cent on direct and indirect Central taxes imposed through Finance (No.2) Act, 2004. With the imposition of the education cess, budgeted outlay for elementary and adult education more than doubled from Rs. 6,000

crore in 2004-05 to Rs.12,532 crore in 2005-06.

10.18 Gross enrolment ratio (GER) indicates the proportion of children in the 6-14 years age group actually enrolled in elementary schools. It has increased progressively from 32.1 in 1950-51 to 84.91 in 2003-04. With the rate of increase in GER of girls higher than that of boys, the gender gap in enrolment is declining. Drop-out rate at the primary level (Classes I-V) declined from 39.0 per cent in 2001-02 to 31.4 per cent in 2003-04. As on October 2005, number of out-of-school children, as reported by States/UTs, was down to 95 lakh from 320 lakh in 2001.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

10.19 The main vehicle for providing elementary education to all children is the ongoing comprehensive programme called Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001-02. The goals of SSA are:-

- i) All children in School, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, Back-to-School camp by 2005;
- ii) Bridge all gender and social category gaps at the primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010;
- iii) Universal retention by 2010; and
- iv) Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.

SSA, implemented in partnership with the States, addresses the needs of 209 million children in the age group of 6-14 years. It covers 9.72 lakh existing primary and upper primary schools and 36.95 lakh teachers.

10.20 National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) is an important component of SSA. NPEGEL provides additional support by way of girl-child friendly schools, stationery, uniforms, etc. for girls' education in educationally backward blocks (EBB), and in other areas for elementary education of under privileged and disadvantaged sections. EBBs are blocks with

female literacy below, and gender gap above, the national average. Apart from EBBs, NPEGEL is also implemented in blocks of districts which are not covered under EBBs but have at least 5 per cent SC/ST population and where SC/ST female literacy is below 10 per cent, and also in select urban slums. In the Tenth Five Year Plan, an amount of Rs.1064.80 crore has been earmarked for this programme.

10.21 Another important component of SSA is the Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS&AIE). EGS&AIE is specially designed to provide access to elementary education to children in school-less habitations and out-of-school children. It supports flexible strategies for out-of-school children through bridge courses, residential camps, drop-in centres, summer camps, remedial coaching, etc., and helped to provide elementary education to 85.67 lakh children in 2004-05.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme

10.22 The Centrally-sponsored Mid-Day Meal Scheme was revised and universalized at primary level with effect from September, 2004 to make a provision for providing cooked meals to children studying in Government, Government-aided, and local body schools and EGS&AIE centres. Besides providing foodgrains free of cost to the States/UTs, and foodgrains transportation subsidy, the Central Government provides assistance for converting foodgrains into cooked meal at a rate of Re. 1 per child per day.

The programme now covers nearly 12 crore children studying in over 9 lakh primary schools and EGS&AIE Centres. Budget provision for this scheme, which is the world's largest school feeding programme involving preparation of a hot meal everyday, for 2005-06 is Rs. 3345.26 crore.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)

10.23 The KGBV scheme was launched in August, 2004 to set up 750 residential schools at elementary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and minorities, in EBBs. All 750 KGBVs have now

been sanctioned by the Government of India, with 117 KGBVs (15.6 per cent) allocated to blocks with substantial minority population. Budget provision for the scheme for 2005-06 is Rs.250 Crore.

Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh (PSK)

10.24 Department of Elementary Education and Literacy issued orders on November 14, 2005 constituting Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh (PSK) to receive the proceeds of the education cess imposed through Finance (No.2) Act, 2004. PSK is a separate, dedicated, non-lapsable fund to be maintained by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Adult education

10.25 Literacy rates in India have risen sharply from 18.3 per cent in 1951 to 64.8 per cent in 2001. Nevertheless, India continues to lag behind several other developing countries in the region such as China (86 per cent) and Sri Lanka (92 per cent). The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched on May 5, 1988 as a Technology Mission to impart functional literacy to non-literates in the country in the age group of 15-35 years in a time-bound manner. This age-group has been the focus of attention because they are in the productive and reproductive period of life. The NPE, 1986, as modified in 1992, recognizes the NLM as one of the three instruments to eradicate illiteracy from the country, the other two being SSA and non-formal education.

10.26 NLM's objective is to attain a sustainable threshold literacy rate of 75 per cent by 2007. The Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) has been the principal strategy of National Literacy Mission for eradication of illiteracy in the target age-group. These campaigns implemented by Zilla Saksharata Samities (District Level Literacy Societies) are area-specific, time-bound, volunteer-based, cost effective and outcome-oriented.

10.27 At present, 137 districts are implementing TLCs, 165 districts Post Literacy Programmes and 295 districts Continuing Education Programmes. In addition, 157 Jan Shikshan Sansthan have been set up to provide vocational training to the neo-literates

and backward sections of the society, and 25 State Resource Centres established for providing academic and technical resource support for the literacy programmes.

10.28 NLM has accorded priority for the promotion of female literacy. According to 2001 Census, 47 districts in the country have female literacy rate below 30 percent. Most of these districts are concentrated in Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. Special innovative projects have been taken up to raise the level of female literacy in these areas. Special efforts have been made to target female Panchayati Raj functionaries and make them literate.

Secondary and higher education

10.29 Secondary education prepares students in the age group of 14-18 years for entry into higher education and employment. The number of secondary and senior secondary schools increased from 1,07,140 in 1997-98 to 1,45,899 in 2003-04 with a total

student enrolment of 35.01 million (Classes IX to XII). There has been an impressive growth in the area of higher education with an increase in annual student enrolment from 7.26 million in 1997-98 to 9.95 million in 2003-04. Enrolment of women students rose from 2.45 million in 1997-98 to 4.03 million in 2004-05, constituting 40.22 per cent of the total enrolment. As per NSSO survey (55th Round 1999-00), there were inequalities in enrolment in higher education across various social groups in rural and urban areas, and also in terms of gender. Women belonging to SC and ST and those living in rural areas are the most disadvantaged. A Constitution Amendment Bill has been passed by Parliament in December, 2005, which enables the State to make special provisions, by law, for admission of students belonging to SC, ST and socially and educationally backward classes to educational institutions, including aided and unaided private educational institutions, except minority institutions referred to in Article 30(1) of the Constitution.