

## Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and its Implementation

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The positive role of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in strengthening the socio-economic base of a nation cannot be over-emphasised. Recognising the importance of it, the original Article 45 in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution mandated the State to endeavour to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to age 14 within a period of 10 years. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986/92, states:

In our national perception, education is essentially for all ... Education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit — thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution.

Via the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, a new Article 21A was added in Part I of the Constitution of India to make free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right for children. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (or RTE) came into force in India with effect from 1 April 2010 (GoI 2009).

Even before the RTE came into force, the Government of India's (GoI's) efforts were towards universalisation of elementary education in the country. This paper describes the stages through which the RTE Act has come into effect and how, in the course of implementing the RTE Act, the existing system has been changed and aligned with a view to fulfil its objectives. It also discusses how various other important schemes of the central and state governments

play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of the RTE. Further, the actual implementation of the RTE-Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and its impact is presented. The concluding section of the chapter deliberates on future needs.

### EVOLUTION OF THE RTE AND SSA

As a follow up to the NPE, a number of programmes were initiated in India with a view to achieving UEE. These efforts were intensified in the 1980s and 1990s through several interventions such as Operation Blackboard (OBB), the Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP), the Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP), the Bihar Education Project (BEP), the UP Basic Education Project (UPBEP), Mahila Samakhyia (MS), the Lok Jumbish Project (LJP), and Teacher Education, which put in place a decentralised system of teacher support through District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). The latest is the SSA, a centrally-sponsored scheme implemented in partnership with state governments for the UEE across the country.

Due to these initiatives, over the years there has been significant spatial and numerical expansion of elementary schools in the country. Today, access and enrolment at the primary stage of education have reached very close to universal levels. The number of out-of-school children at the elementary level has reduced significantly. The gender gap in elementary education has narrowed and the percentage of enrolled children belonging to scheduled castes and tribes has increased successively. Despite this, the goal of universal elementary education is yet to be achieved in the country. There remains the unfinished agenda of universal education at the upper primary stage. The number of children — particularly those from disadvantaged groups and weaker

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sections — who drop out of school before completing upper primary education remains high. The quality of learning achievement is not always entirely satisfactory even in the case of children who complete elementary education. With a view to address these issues, the RTE has been introduced to directly counter the problems of illiteracy, poor quality infrastructure and learning level in the elementary education sector. However, the road to the RTE Act has not been easy. The exercise of consulting all stakeholders including the states and taking them on board has been time-consuming.

The main provisions in the RTE Act include the responsibilities of appropriate government and local authorities towards establishing neighbourhood schools; sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the central and state governments; prohibition of capitation fee and screening procedure for admission; prohibition of detention, expulsion and corporal punishment; specification of norms and standards for schools including those related to the infrastructure and teachers; laying down of teacher qualifications and their duties; prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational purposes; and ensuring that curriculum and evaluation is in accordance with the Constitution of India and as per child-centred principles and values. Children with disabilities and those belonging to minority communities are also covered under the Act.

As per the RTE Act, 2009, every child has the right to full-time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school that satisfies certain essential norms and standards. The need to address inadequacies in retention, residual access, particularly of un-reached children, and the questions of quality are the most compelling reasons for the addition of Article 21A in the Constitution of India.

As has already been stated, even prior to the RTE, the GoI's efforts were towards universalisation of elementary education in the country. The SSA was the most prominent among all efforts initiated by the GoI before 2010 and was approved by the union cabinet in November 2000 as a centrally-sponsored scheme. The goals of the SSA are (a) enrolment of all children in schools, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres, alternate schools, 'back-to-school' camps, (b) retention of all children till the upper primary stage, (c) bridging of gender and social category gaps in enrolment, retention and learning, and (d) ensuring significant enhancement in the learning achievement levels of children at the primary and upper primary stages.

There is little difference between the objectives of the RTE and those under the SSA. Yet, there are fundamental variations between the two. While the provisions under the SSA were not part of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution, the RTE provisions form an integral part. Under the RTE, 'free education' has been defined, and

it states that no child, other than one who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. 'Compulsory education' casts an obligation on the appropriate government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the age group of 6–14 years. With this, India has moved forward to a rights-based framework under the RTE Act that casts a legal obligation on the central and state governments to implement this fundamental right.

The roadmap for universalising elementary education is derived from the definite timeframes mandated in the RTE Act; it prescribes a timeframe of three years for the establishment of neighbourhood schools, provision of school infrastructure with an all-weather building and basic facilities, and provision of teachers as per prescribed Pupil–Teacher Ratio (PTR) (30:1). Further, the RTE Act stipulates that all untrained teachers in the system must be trained within a period of five years from the date of enforcement of the Act. The rest of the provisions are required to be implemented with immediate effect.

The RTE Act has had considerable implications for the overall approach and implementation strategies of the SSA. With the enactment of the RTE, there was a need to review the interventions under the SSA and align its norms with the RTE mandate. Today, the SSA is the main implementation vehicle for the RTE Act, 2009: the Implementation Framework of the SSA has in fact been revised to coordinate with the provisions of the RTE Act. A comprehensive monitoring mechanism has also been put in place to ensure smooth implementation of the SSA.

The major changes in the SSA norms effected by the executive committee of the SSA in January 2010 are:

- (a) School to be established/ensured within the limits of the neighbourhood as laid down by the state government pursuant to the RTE Act;
- (b) All existing EGS centres that have been functioning for two years or more to be upgraded to regular schools, or closed down. No new EGS centres to be sanctioned from 2010–11 onwards;
- (c) Special training to be carried out for age-appropriate enrolment of out-of-school and dropout children through residential and non-residential courses;
- (d) School infrastructure norms to include libraries, including a one-time grant for books worth ₹3,000 for primary schools and ₹10,000 for upper primary schools;
- (e) Ceiling on school repairs up to a maximum of 5 per cent of the existing schools for each district in a particular year, which inhibited the demand for repairs, removed;

- (f) School grant to be utilised for play material and sports equipment, in addition to the existing provision for replacement of non-functional school equipment and other recurring costs such as consumables;
- (g) Training norms to include training of resource persons, master trainers, and Block Resource Centre (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) coordinators for up to 10 days each year at ₹100 per person per day;
- (h) Financial provisions for children with special needs increased from ₹1,200 to ₹3,000 per child per year, provided that at least ₹1,000 per child will be used for the engagement of resource teachers;
- (i) Community mobilisation provisions strengthened by raising the number of training days for community personnel from two to six, comprising three-day residential and three-day non-residential training. Financial limits for training also hiked, from ₹30 to ₹100 per day per person for residential training and ₹50 per day per person for non-residential training;
- (j) Management cost for districts with small annual plan and size increased from ₹2 million per district to ₹4 million subject to the overall ceiling of 6 per cent being maintained at the national level.

Further to the change in the SSA norms, the timeframes shown in Table 3.1, mandated by the RTE Act, become immediately applicable to the SSA:

**TABLE 3.1** Activities and their Timeframes: Ministry of Human Resource Development

Activity	Timeframe
Establishment of neighbourhood schools	3 years (by 31 March 2013)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of school infrastructure</li> <li>• All-weather school buildings</li> <li>• One-classroom-one-teacher</li> <li>• Office-cum-store-cum-head teacher room</li> <li>• Toilets and drinking water facilities</li> <li>• Barrier-free access</li> <li>• Library</li> <li>• Playground</li> <li>• Fences/boundary walls</li> </ul>	3 years (by 31 March 2013)
Provision of teachers as per prescribed PTR	3 years (by 31 March 2013)
Training of untrained teachers	5 years (by 31 March 2015)
All quality interventions and other provisions	With immediate effect

Source: GoI (2009, 2012).

### Funding the RTE

An outlay of ₹2,312.3 billion has been sanctioned for implementation of the combined SSA programme under

the RTE for the period 2010–11 to 2014–15. Out of this total amount, ₹1,836.4 billion (79 per cent) is recurring and ₹475.9 billion is non-recurring (21 per cent). The fund-sharing pattern between centre and state was originally approved under the SSA for the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan in a sliding scale, namely 65:35 in the first two years, 60:40 in the third year, 55:45 in the fourth year, and 50:50 in the fifth year. However, in view of the increased financial requirements, the need to revisit the ongoing funding pattern of the SSA is recognised and the sharing pattern has since been revised. The 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission award of ₹240.6 billion for elementary education has been made available to the states to implement the combined RTE-SSA programme. The balance requirement of ₹2,071.6 billion would be shared between the centre and the states in the ratio of 65:35 for all states/union territories for the period from 2010–11 to 2014–15. However, in the case of eight states in the North Eastern Region (NER), the existing sharing pattern of 90:10 will continue. Therefore, the provision of a central outlay is to the tune of ₹1,371 billion (out of which for the NER it would be ₹88.2 billion) over a five-year period from 2010–11 to 2014–15.

### GOVERNMENT SCHEMES COMPLEMENTING RTE-SSA

There are a few other schemes that are being implemented simultaneously by various ministries/departments of the GoI. Some of the requirements mandated under the RTE also exist under certain other schemes of the Department of School Education and Literacy, such as Teacher Education and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) schemes. Certain other provisions of the RTE are sourced through convergence of agencies other than the MHRD, such as facilities of drinking water and toilets for existing schools. Therefore, these schemes directly and indirectly facilitate the attaining of the goal of UEE and fulfilling the mandate of the RTE. In this context, a few prominent schemes are

- (a) the MDM Scheme of the Department of School Education and Literacy for providing a noon meal to children at the elementary stage of education;
- (b) the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and the Drinking Water Mission (DWM) under the Ministry of Rural Development for providing drinking water and toilets in schools;
- (c) the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) of the Ministry of Labour to provide special schools for child labourers withdrawn from work;
- (d) residential facilities for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) children by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs;

- (e) pre-primary education under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development;
- (f) the School Health Programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; and
- (g) Teacher Education of the Department of Elementary and School Education.

A few of these major schemes are discussed in this section.

### ICDS Scheme

One of the world's largest programmes for early childhood development called the ICDS scheme is being implemented through the *Anganwadi* system in India. The scheme was launched in 1975 with the objective:

- (a) to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age group of 0–6 years;
- (b) to lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child;
- (c) to reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition, and school dropout;
- (d) to achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development; and
- (e) to enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

Keeping in view the importance of the ICDS, recommendations have been made to include the key provisions of this scheme in the proposed National Food Security Bill (NFSB). With the enactment of the NFSB, the services under ICDS would become legal entitlements.

'Pre-school non-formal education' is one of the six prominent services through which the ICDS objectives are to be fulfilled. This pre-school non-formal education plays a significant role in the smooth sailing of a child from pre-school to pre-primary school.

The ICDS scheme services are provided through *Anganwadi* centres (AWCs) in India. The total number of approved AWCs in the country is 1.4 million. As on January 2011, the total number of operational AWCs is 1.3 million and the number of *Anganwadi* Workers (AWWs) and *Anganwadi* Helpers (AWHs) is 1.2 million and 1.1 million respectively. The AWWs and AWHs are engaged to ensure uninterrupted services to the beneficiaries. Towards offering these services, the AWW and AWH are provided an honorarium of ₹3,000 and ₹1,500 per month respectively. The GoI has been making adequate budget provisions to carry out the activities under the ICDS, under which the total actual outlay during the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (up to December 2011) is reported to be ₹403 billion, and total likely expenditure till the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan would be ₹438.2 billion as against the ₹444

billion originally approved/allocated for the ICDS during the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan.

Though studies have pointed out several shortcomings, including the challenge to bridge the gap between the policy intentions of the ICDS and its actual implementation, low priority accorded by state governments towards implementation of the ICDS, etc., the scheme has played a significant role in the areas of supplementary nutrition, immunisation as also in the realm of pre-school education. As per data provided by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, over time there has been an improvement in the number of children who attended pre-school. While 30 million children attended pre-school in 2010–11, the figure increased to 35.8 million in 2011–12. The evaluation of the ICDS by the Planning Commission, conducted through the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in 2009, observed that the scheme has positively influenced formal school enrolment and contributed to reduction in early discontinuation among beneficiaries.

### Mid-Day Meal Scheme

With a view to enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the GoI has been making adequate provision in the budget for the National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools, popularly known as the MDM Scheme. The scheme has had a beneficial impact on school participation in terms of getting more children enrolled and encouraging regular pupil attendance. It acts as a regular source of 'supplementary nutrition' for children as well and can help spread egalitarian values. The MDM Scheme presently covers all children studying in Classes I–VIII of government, government-aided and local body schools; National Child Labour Project schools; and Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres, including *madrassas* and *maktabs* supported under the SSA.

As per the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), 84.1 million primary children and 3.36 million upper-primary children, i.e., a total of 117.7 million children were estimated to have benefited from the MDM Scheme during 2009–10. During 2010–11, 113.6 million children — i.e., 79.7 million children in primary and 33.9 million children in upper primary — are expected to be covered in 1.2 million institutions.

Studies have reviewed and observed the significant benefits of the MDM Scheme. As per the findings of T. Vijaya Kumar: 'The overall implementations of the programme in Primary schools are found to be satisfactory in all the six sample districts of Andhra Pradesh' (2011: xv). However, the report also mentions that '[a] lot of [effort still

needs] to be put in for improvement of the programme implementation and [p]roper orientation [training is] to be conducted for functionaries and stakeholders like cooking agencies for effective implementation of the scheme' (ibid.). It further states that '[t]he mid-day meal programme has an impact on the enrolment and nutritional status of the children' (ibid.: xxxiv). The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, in its MDM monitoring report on Theni and Kanyakumari districts has stated that '[t]he MDM is extremely beneficial to the children, especially the rural and urban poor. The scheme should be strengthened through allocation of more meals per school and should include *one fruit and one glass of milk* for every child every day' (IIT 2011: 31).

A provision of ₹37 billion has been made in the budget estimate for 2012–13 for the MDM Scheme as against ₹28.6 billion in the revised estimate 2011–12.

### Teacher Education

The centrally-sponsored scheme of re-structuring and re-organisation of Teacher Education was initiated in 1987 pursuant to the formulation of the NPE, 1986, which emphasised the significance and need for a decentralised system for the professional preparation of teachers. It was in this context that DIETs, Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Study in Education (IASEs) were established. At present, more than 555 DIETs are functional and 105 CTEs and 31 IASEs have been set up as resource institutions in the country. The DIETs run a pre-service Teacher Education Programme. About 60,000 innovative teachers are trained every year through the DIET's two-year diploma in Education. As per the evaluation report by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT 2009) these institutions have played a positive role in improving the quality of school and teacher education. The DIET programmes have given a platform towards undertaking research and experimentation among practising teachers. Almost all teachers who received training were found to be competent to conduct the action research and solve their own problems.

The NCERT evaluation report also suggested many changes based on the findings and inadequate performances with regard to certain aspects of the scheme (ibid.). The government has recently approved a revised Teacher Education scheme (mainly based on the NCERT's evaluation and felt need) with much emphasis on the needs arising due to the enactment of the RTE Act. The revised scheme aims to strengthen the teacher education system through qualitative and quantitative strengthening of the teacher education institutions so as to prepare an adequate number of qualified persons for the schools.

There are three salient components of the revised scheme:

- (a) *Revision of existing norms:*
  - (i) strengthening and upgradation of State Councils of Educational Research and Training and State Institutes of Education;
  - (ii) strengthening of existing IASEs and improvement of departments of Education in universities into IASEs;
  - (iii) strengthening of existing CTEs and establishment of new ones;
  - (iv) strengthening of existing DIETs and extending their mandate for training of teachers at the secondary level.
- (b) *Inclusion of new components:*
  - (i) establishment of Block Institutes of Teacher Education (BITEs) in 196 identified SC/ST/minority concentration districts for undertaking elementary pre-service teacher education programmes;
  - (ii) professional development of teacher educators;
  - (iii) technology in teacher education
  - (iv) Public–Private Partnership (PPP) in teacher education;
  - (v) monitoring mechanism.
- (c) *Revision of fund-sharing pattern between the centre and the state:* 75:25 ratio between centre and states (90:10 for the NER States including Sikkim) to ensure greater ownership by the states.

Modification of the scheme is also critical to meet the training requirements of teachers at the secondary level under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan.

To implement the revised centrally-sponsored scheme Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education, an estimated outlay of ₹6.4 billion for 2011–12 and of ₹63 billion for the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan has been approved by the Cabinet. A provision of ₹4.5 billion has been set aside for the scheme in 2012–13.

Thus, a number of important schemes with substantial budgetary provisions are in place contributing to improving school education. In fact, some of the existing and ongoing schemes are being re-structured/strengthened to overcome the weaknesses in realising the desired objectives.

## IMPLEMENTING THE RTE ACT

### Monitoring

One of the most crucial aspects of the RTE is a strong monitoring system. The central government has — via notification dated 29 March 2010 — constituted the National Advisory Council (NAC) under the RTE Act, 2009 (PIB 2010). The RTE Act provides for mechanisms for monitoring its

implementation, including the following. (a) The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and the State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been empowered to protect and monitor the rights of children under the Act; (b) in States where the SCPCR is not constituted, the state government may constitute an authority to perform the functions of the SCPCR under the Act; (c) any person with any grievance relating to right of the child under the Act can make a written complaint to the local authority, which shall decide the matter within a period of three months; and (d) the School Management Committee (SMC) constituted under the Act is empowered to monitor the working of the school.

As per the RTE Act, 2009, every school other than an unaided private school shall constitute an SMC, which will perform various functions including preparation of the school development plan. At least three-fourths of the members of SMCs shall be parents or guardians, with a proportionate representation of parents and guardians of children belonging to disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, and 50 per cent of the members shall be women. The Model Rules prepared by the central government and circulated to all states and union territories for adoption/adaptation *inter alia* specify the manner of constituting the SMCs and the additional functions that they should perform. States and union territories have undertaken the process of constituting SMCs in schools. The SMC is likely to take care of local needs and act as a body ensuring checks and balances. This will also strengthen the efficiency of the scheme at the grassroots level.

In addition to this, 42 independent agencies of national repute have been engaged on a two-yearly basis to monitor the SSA programme. These Monitoring Institutions (MIs) submit reports every six months to the central authority. The half-yearly reports submitted by the MIs are shared with the concerned State Project Directors of the SSA of states and union territories for appropriate follow-ups and remedial action. The reports of the MIs are posted on the SSA website.<sup>1</sup> An independent agency, the Institute of Public Auditors of India (IPAI), has also been appointed for concurrent financial review to cover all the states and union territories. It submits reports to the Ministry annually which are further shared with the concerned states and union territories for taking necessary corrective action. The SSA also conducts third-party evaluation through independent agencies for civil work taken up in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The development of a sound information system is critical for successful monitoring and implementation of any programme, particularly in social sectors. The design of the

school information system has, therefore, been accorded priority from the very beginning of the DPEP, as a result of which the District Information System for Education (DISE) was developed by the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi. When the SSA was launched in 2001, not only was the coverage extended to all states and districts of the country, its scope was also expanded to include the entire elementary level of education including government-aided and private schools. Today, among various other sources, DISE data are used for evaluating the progress made so far as well as in framing policy initiatives.

### Implementation

After enacting the RTE Act, 2009, the state governments have taken steps for implementing the same. All state and union territory governments have issued the RTE Rules, or adopted the Central RTE Rules, except for Goa and Karnataka, which are yet to notify the state RTE rules.

Several states have issued instructions/notifications for (a) banning capitation fees, corporal punishment, detention and expulsion, and private tuition by school teachers; (b) specifying working days/instructional hours; and (c) constituting the SCPCR or Right to Education Protection Authority (REPA). The central government has also taken several steps for implementation of the RTE Act. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the NCERT have been notified as the academic authorities under Sections 23(1) and 29(1) of the RTE Act respectively. The NAC has been constituted under Section 33(1) of the Act. The NCTE has laid down the minimum qualifications for a person to be eligible for appointment as a teacher in schools.

The main challenges under the RTE Act include bringing out-of-school children into the schools, filling up the large vacancy of teacher posts, training of untrained teachers, and adherence by schools to the norms and standards specified in the Schedule of the RTE Act. The central government, along with the state governments, is taking several steps for addressing these issues, including resource allocation for meeting the infrastructural and manpower gaps as per the revised SSA norms.

### Progress in Educational Indicators

A few of the indicators of progress made so far in terms of financial, physical and quality aspects are provided in Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

#### Financial Allocation

Table 3.2 shows a detailed list of funds that were given to states and union territories in 2010–11 and 2011–12 for the implementation of the revised SSA in keeping with the RTE Act.

TABLE 3.2 Details of Funds Released to States/Union Territories during 2010–11 and 2011–12 (Till 27 July 2011) for Implementation of Revised SSA (in ₹)

<i>States/Union Territories (other than NER)</i>	<i>Amount Released (Central Share) during 2010–11 (in million)</i>	<i>Amount Released (Central Share) during 2011–12 (in million)</i>
Andhra Pradesh	8,100	18,355.1
Bihar	20,478.9	18,510.8
Chhattisgarh	8,786.3	6,987.0
Goa	67.1	107.9
Gujarat	4,406.5	8,802.7
Haryana	3,278.6	4,046.1
Himachal Pradesh	1,378.6	1,419.2
Jammu and Kashmir	4,034.8	3,007.0
Jharkhand	8,956.2	5,790.3
Karnataka	6,690.3	6,278.8
Kerala	1,966.0	1,702.1
Madhya Pradesh	17,678.3	19,042.7
Maharashtra	8,553.7	11,796.2
Odisha	7,317.7	9,271.9
Punjab	3,961.2	4,811.2
Rajasthan	14,618.2	1,485.0
Tamil Nadu	6,906.8	6,814.1
Uttar Pradesh	31,046.2	26,368.2
Uttarakhand	2,579.3	2,089.2
West Bengal	17,470.3	17,765.2
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	35.7	90.7
Chandigarh	215.5	161.1
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	41.3	56.4
Daman and Diu	16.2	25.7
Delhi	355.2	378.3
Lakshadweep	12.7	12.7
Puducherry	48.5	75.7
National Component	78.0	347.9
Other Expenditure	346.5	561.2
<b>Total (Non-NER)</b>	<b>179,424.6</b>	<b>189,534.8<sup>a</sup></b>
<i>States/Union Territories (NER States)</i>	<i>Amount Released (Central Share) during 2010–11 (in million)</i>	<i>Amount Released (Central Share) during 2011–12 (in million)</i>
Assam	7,685.4	10,692.1
Arunachal Pradesh	2,040.1	2,388.0
Manipur	1,325.3	394.0
Meghalaya	1,854.0	1,441.0
Mizoram	1,011.5	1,081.4
Nagaland	863.6	979.8
Sikkim	446.9	402.2
Tripura	1,712.1	1,749.3
<b>Total NER</b>	<b>16,938.9</b>	<b>19,127.8</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>196,363.5</b>	<b>208,662.6<sup>a</sup></b>

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Note: <sup>a</sup> The figures might not add up to the total as only major figures have been included.

TABLE 3.3 Status of Progress since 2006–07

	2006–07	2009–10	2010–11
Primary Schools (in million)	0.77	0.81	0.82
Upper Primary Schools (in million)	0.41	0.49	0.53
Primary Enrolment (in million)	132.00	133.00	135.00
Upper Primary Enrolment (in million)	47.50	54.50	57.80
Elementary Enrolment (in million)	180.00	188.00	192.80
GER <sup>a</sup> Primary (in per cent)	111.0	115.0	118.6
NER <sup>a</sup> Primary (in per cent)	93.0	98.0	99.8
GER Upper Primary (in per cent)	64.7	75.8	81.2
NER Upper Primary (in per cent)	48.4	58.3	61.8
Teachers in Government Schools (in million)	3.60	3.90	4.19
Out-of-School Children <sup>b</sup> (in million)	11.30	8.10	—

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Note: <sup>a</sup> GER and NER mean gross and net enrolment ratios respectively.

NER=Enrolled children in the official school age group/Total number of children in the official school age group.

GER=Enrolled children of all ages/Total number of children in the official school age group.

The primary school net enrolment ratio (NER) is the share of children of official primary school age that are enrolled in school; the NER cannot exceed 100 per cent. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) is the share of children of *any* age that are enrolled in primary school. In India, many children who are beyond primary level are still enrolled in the primary section and hence the GER exceeds 100 per cent.

<sup>b</sup> Figures are not available.

## Enrolment

Efforts to universalise elementary education gained momentum during the last few years as indicated in Table 3.3.

Enrolment in government schools at elementary level increased from 126 million children in 2006–07 to 130 million in 2010–11. In addition, another 17 million were enrolled in government-aided schools, and 42 million were attending private unaided schools in 2010–11.

The GER at primary level is high at 118.6 per cent;<sup>2</sup> and NER has improved significantly from 92.7 per cent in 2006–07 to 99.8 per cent in 2010–11. The GER at upper primary level has shown considerable improvement of 11.8 percentage points in the four years between 2006 and 2009, and a further increase of 5.4 percentage points in 2010–11. With the RTE stipulations with regard to the entry level at age 6, no detention and expulsion, an eight-year elementary education cycle, and maintenance of record of children, it is expected that the GER at both primary and upper primary levels is going to improve in the years to come.

## Schooling Facilities

The country has witnessed substantial increase in the number of primary and upper primary schools. Table 3.4 shows that in 2009–10 there was an increase of more than 9.1 per cent in the number of schools in the country as compared to 2006–07. This went up by another 4.5 per cent in 2010–11.

## Enrolment – Gender

The percentage of girls out of the total number enrolled at primary and upper primary levels was 48 and 46.5 respectively in the year 2006–07; this increased to 48.4 and 48.3 at primary and upper primary levels respectively in 2010–11. The annual average growth rate of enrolment for girls is considerably higher as compared to boys (see Table 3.5).

Gender Parity Index (GPI) has also shown significant increase, particularly at the upper primary level. The primary-level GPI improved marginally from 0.93 in 2006–07 to 0.94 in 2010–11. However, GPI at upper primary level increased from 0.87 in 2006–07 to 0.94 in 2010–11. Year-wise details are given in Table 3.5.

Decline in the percentage of out-of-school children has taken place across gender and all social categories; nonetheless Muslim, SC and ST children need greater and more focused attention. The percentage of out-of-school children aged 6–14 years has decreased from 6.94 per cent in 2005 to 4.28 per cent in 2009. This decrease is sharper in rural areas, where it drops from 7.08 per cent to 4.53 per cent as compared to urban areas where it has moved from 4.34 per cent to 3.18 per cent only.

## Teachers in Position

There has been a substantial increase in the availability of teachers at elementary level in the past few years. The total number of teachers in government schools increased

TABLE 3.4 Total Schools, by Category

Academic Year	Primary Only	Primary with Upper Primary	Primary with Upper Primary and Secondary/Higher Secondary	Upper Primary Only	Upper Primary with Secondary/Higher Secondary	Total Schools
2006–07	779,482	210,014	29,312	108,095	67,601	1,194,504
2007–08	805,667	217,442	35,974	115,961	69,155	1,244,199
2008–09	809,108	234,345	39,440	125,169	77,225	1,285,287
2009–10	809,978	247,643	41,435	128,165	76,552	1,303,773
2010–11	827,244	258,803	48,135	136,423	91,719	1,362,324

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

TABLE 3.5 Sex-Wise Enrolment, by Stages (in million)

Academic Year	Primary (Classes I–V)			Upper Primary (Classes VI–VIII)			Elementary (Classes I–VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2006–07	68.4	63.4	131.8	25.4	22.1	47.5	93.8	85.5	179.3
2007–08	69.5	64.7	134.2	27.0	23.9	50.9	96.4	88.6	185.0
2008–09	69.4	65.0	134.4	28.0	25.4	53.4	97.3	90.4	187.7
2009–10	68.8	64.7	133.5	28.3	26.2	54.5	97.1	90.9	188.0
2010–11	69.8	65.5	135.3	29.9	28.0	57.9	99.6	93.4	193.0

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

from 3.6 million in 2006–07 to 3.9 million in 2009–10, and further to 4.19 million in 2010–11. This has resulted in the improvement of the PTR from 36:1 in 2006–07 to 32:1 in 2010–11 at the primary level and 29:1 at the upper primary level.

The norm prescribing 50 per cent of all teachers recruited under the SSA to be female has resulted in the increase in percentage of female teachers from 41.8 per cent in 2006–07 to 45.5 per cent in 2010–11.

The real challenge, however, lies in the imbalance in teacher deployment. The number of schools with adverse PTR remains high, though it has reduced from 46 per cent in primary and 34 per cent in upper primary schools in 2009–10 to 42.4 per cent and 31.3 per cent respectively in 2010–11. Even in states with an overall desirable PTR, there are many schools with adverse PTR. Moreover, 7.7 per cent single-teacher schools have an enrolment of more than 15 children functioning in the country. Although this is an improvement over 10.5 per cent single-teacher schools in 2006–07, there are large inter-state variations: Arunachal Pradesh (26.6 per cent), Assam (14.1 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (14.7 per cent), Manipur (10.1 per cent), Odisha (11.9 per cent), and Rajasthan (14.7 per cent). There is therefore an urgent need to fill up existing vacancies and rationalise teacher deployment.

Another challenge is the presence of teachers without professional qualifications notified by the NCTE as required

under the RTE Act. As per the DISE 2010–11, there are about 0.8 million untrained teachers spread all over the country, but the majority are in the four states of Bihar (0.17 million), West Bengal (0.17 million), Uttar Pradesh (0.14 million), and Jharkhand (0.07 million), constituting about 68 per cent of total untrained teachers.

### School Infrastructure

Under the SSA, the country has seen massive infrastructure development at the school level. Apart from opening over 0.3 million new schools, the SSA has also provided basic facilities in existing schools. The average student–classroom ratio (SCR) which was 36 in 2006–07 has come down to 31 in 2010–11. There has been a considerable rise in the availability of basic facilities in schools, including increase in percentage of schools having drinking water facility from 83.1 per cent in 2006–07 to 92.6 per cent in 2010–11. Girls' toilets are now available in 57 per cent of schools as against 42.5 per cent in 2006–07. The percentage of schools with ramps for the differently-abled has increased from 26.61 per cent in 2006–07 to 50 per cent in 2010–11. The details of improvement in school infrastructure are presented in Table 3.6.

With regard to opening of schools, provision of school infrastructure and drinking water facilities, the overall cumulative performance is more than 85 per cent.

An allocation of ₹255.55 billion has been provided for the RTE-SSA programme for 2012–13. The target for 2012–13

TABLE 3.6 School Infrastructure

Indicator	2006-07	2010-11
Average SCR	36.0	31.0
Schools with Drinking Water (in per cent)	84.0	93.0
Schools with Toilet Facilities (in per cent)	57.0	42.5
Schools with Ramps (in per cent)	26.6	50.0
School with Playground (in per cent)	—	55.0
School with Boundary Wall (in per cent)	—	55.0

*Source:* District Information System for Education, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, Government of India.

*Note:* '—' means data either not available or the classification/definition has undergone changes so that strict comparison is not possible.

is towards opening of 5,000 primary schools and 10,000 upper primary schools, recruiting 0.1 million teachers and construction of 0.1 million additional classrooms.

## FUTURE NEEDS AND CONCLUSION

As mentioned previously, substantial spatial and numerical expansion of primary and upper primary schools has been achieved with access and enrolment at the primary stage of education reaching near universal levels, gender gap in enrolment being narrowed and the percentage of enrolled SC/ST children being proportionate to their population. Nonetheless, the agenda of universalising education at the upper primary stage remains unfinished. The number of children — particularly children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections — who drop out of school before completing upper primary education remains high, and the

quality of learning achievement is not satisfactory even in the case of children who complete elementary education.

Despite the fact that there has been a huge increase in the investment and levels of physical and infrastructural progress in elementary education in the SSA regime, and in the post-RTE regime in particular, the main objective of 'learning' is not satisfactory. It is therefore imperative to look beyond the provision of infrastructure alone in the pursuit of improved learning levels. While there is no denying the fact that school buildings and teachers are important, it is equally, if not more, important to achieve the desired quality of education and learning level of a child who completes primary education. So far, the existing structure has not yielded full results in terms of learning outcomes. It is thus imperative to do something more over and above what is already there today. It might lead us to approach the problem a little differently.

Learning level is directly and positively correlated to the quality of teaching. It also depends on a student's ability to understand and follow the teaching method, including the language and methodology of the teacher. A more personal approach rather than a generalised one would work better, and it may well be the case that the local teacher's personalised efforts even beyond school hours would yield better results. From the recent trends in the incidence of tuitions, it can be inferred that the rise in the number of private tuition is attributable to personalised efforts vis-à-vis the generalised approach in school. Teachers must also get requisite motivation through appropriate training on a continuous basis as well as financial incentives linked with the learning outcome of their students. To implement these practices there is a need to start a few pilots in select districts/blocks. Each pilot district/block could have a committee, flexible enough to experiment upon various policies including hiring local teachers (on need-basis). Depending upon need, this

TABLE 3.7 Cumulative Targets and Achievements, 2011-12

Items	Achievements (up to 30 September 2011)	
Opening of Schools	Opened	333,458 (388,157) <sup>a</sup>
Construction of School Buildings	Completed and in Progress	267,209 (299,808)
Construction of Additional Classrooms	Completed and in Progress	1.41 million
Drinking Water Facilities	Completed and in Progress	212,233 (220,953)
Construction of Toilets	Completed and in Progress	477,263
Supply of Free Textbooks	Supplied	87.7 million
Teacher Appointment	Completed	1.22 million
Teacher Training (20 Days)	Completed	1.92 million

*Source:* Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

*Note:* <sup>a</sup> Targeted figures are in the parentheses and are given wherever available.

committee may advise and assist SMCs on the functioning of the school. This committee could remain directly responsible for the desired parameters including enrolment, learning outcomes, etc. In short, a model district/block needs to be developed for the purpose of achieving the objectives and mandates (with timelines) of the RTE. Once proven to be successful, the model districts may be replicated throughout the country.

Till date, children who are below 6 years and above 14 years of age are not covered by the Act. With the possible restructuring of the ICDS and making all its services part of the National Food Security Bill, children up to 6 years of age may be covered, which may be difficult under the existing ICDS infrastructure. It is also necessary to make efforts to universalise secondary and higher secondary education so

that the GERs at these levels are ensured. Unless adequate initiatives are undertaken proactively towards addressing these issues, it may be difficult to gain the full benefit of RTE implementation in the country. Implementation of the RTE primarily depends on the states' effective participation. Under the federal structure each state would need to work, on priority, towards the common goal of achieving universalisation of primary education.

A lot has already been achieved in fulfilling the RTE mandates. However, there are still gaps between the RTE mandates/targets and the actual implementation/achievements. Available reports have pointed out a number of shortcomings and suggested various policy interventions. If these suggestions are examined and adopted wherever necessary, the gaps would soon disappear.

## NOTES

1. <http://www.ssa.nic.in/> (accessed 2 November 2012).
2. It may be noted that at primary level the GER is more than 100. This is due to the fact that many children who are not

supposed to be admitted in the primary level as per the age criteria were enrolled in the same. Here, the NER may be a better indicator.

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