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"Education for All" in India:

Historical development, especially in the light of gender equality and impact on the present day situation

Sangeeta Shirname (Ph. D.),
Indic Society for Education and Development (INSEED),
Nashik, India

"Education for all" declares that everyone has a right to education. Its aim is to give everyone a chance to learn and benefit from basic education – not as an accident of circumstance, or as a privilege, but as a RIGHT.

Introduction

In India, at this point in time, exists in two different worlds. They survive side by side, but worlds apart. There are various fields where India has made substantial achievements, especially in the field of science & technology. India has embraced the knowledge economy, become a centre for technological development and manufacturing, and expanded its service sector. Over the last five years it has seen its highest ever economic growth, rivaling that of many high-income countries.

Many schools in India are of a high standard. They could easily be comparable to any school of international standard. India has affluent schools affiliated with international boards, with best of facilities, with best of the teachers –who are well paid and are beginning to match corporate pay packets.

In 1993, the Supreme Court of India declared that education up to fourteen years of age is to be considered as a fundamental right of children in India. The entire school education can be divided into four parts, namely, primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. The National Policy of Education (1968 & 1986) and its revised formulation (1992) envisaged a uniform pattern of school education (10+2 pattern i.e., 12 years of schooling) across all Indian states.

Keeping in the line with the changes in society in India, the Govt. introduced various types of schools. Beside schools run by local authorities, the Govt. has also opened expensive schools for quality education. They fall under various schemes: The Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV), Sainik Schools, Railway Schools, Tibetan Schools and (more recently) Navodaya Vidyalayas. The KVs' were set up to cater to children of government servants who were subject to All-India transferability. Navodaya Vidyalayas were set up as residential schools with 75 per cent reservations for rural candidates, with all candidates being selected on the basis of a nation-wide talent test. There is a 30 per cent reservation for girls as well as reservation for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes commensurate with their population strength in the district.

Yet, a closer look at the Indian school system tells a very different story. Many of the Indian schools still lack basic facilities such as school buildings, drinking water and often have only one teacher to teach all standards (Table 1). These classes have children of age group from 5 to 12 years in same class.

Table 1: Schools without basic facilities

% schools without facilities	*Primary*		*Upper primary*	
	2004-05	*2005-06*	*2004-05*	*2005-06*
Building	**3.5**	**3.0**	**2.8**	**2.4**
Toilet	**51.4**	**44.6**	**16.8**	**15.3**
Boundary wall	**50.4**	**50.8**	**15.7**	**16.5**
Drinking water	**16.3**	**15.1**	**4.7**	**4.8**

Source : DISE data

For a country keen to be a major global player, the pressing question is: why is the 'new' India unable to achieve free and universal schooling at the most basic levels?

Historical development towards "education for all"

Free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen years is the Constitutional commitment in India (Article 45). At the time of the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, the aim was to achieve the goal of *Universalisation of Elementary Education* (UEE) within the next ten years i.e. by 1960. Keeping in view the educational facilities available in the country at that time, the goal was far too ambitious to achieve within a short span of ten years. To facilitate the achievement of UEE goal, the National Council of Educational Research & Training (NCERT), the National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration (NIEPA) and many other institutes were set up in 1960's as

resource, research and training centers.

In order to give access to elementary education for all children up to 14 years of age and for universal participation till they complete the elementary stage of educational programs, the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968, the NPE in 1986, the Program of Action (POA) elaborated in the NPE of 1986 and the updated form of the NPE in 1992 gave an unqualified priority to the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) program.

At the time of Independence in the year 1947, India inherited a system of education which was not only quantitatively small but also characterized by the persistence of large intra- and inter-regional as well as structural imbalances. Only 14 percent of population was literate, and one child out of three had been enrolled in the primary school. The need for a literate population and universal education for all in the age group of 6- 14 was recognized as a crucial input for nation building and was given due consideration in successive five year plans.

The NPE, 1968 stressed on the elimination of disparities in the educational system and on the improvement in the quality of the school. The emphasis was more on retention rather than merely on enrollment. Between 1950 to 1968, there was substantial increase in the number of primary schools, but records shows that in 1967-68 the retention rate came down to 35%. This shows that the policy statement did not get translated into a detailed strategy of implementation. As a result, problems of access, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay, have accumulated over the years, to reach massive proportions.

The Fifth All India Educational Survey-1986 mentions that, the disparity in enrollment still persisted between the states at the primary level. To tackle these problems, the Govt. of India formulated a new education policy in 1986. In this policy, along with the universal access, enrollment and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, a substantial improvement in the quality of education, was emphasized. This policy gave the highest priority to solving the problem of children dropping out of the school. This is evident from the emphasis given on non-formal education in the policy.

At the same time it was decided that the various parameters of implementation of New Policy must be reviewed after every five years. This would ascertain the progress of implementation of the policy and focus on the

emerging trends in the area of education.

The NPE, 1986 which was modified in 1992 as a 'Program of Action (POA) made certain modifications in the earlier policy. The POA, 1992 emphasized three aspects: universal access and enrollment; universal retention of children up to age 14 years; and a substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning at the primary education levels.

Literacy

India's progress in literacy has been tremendous during the last five decades. However, a feature that remains consistent in the literacy situations in India is the existence of large disparities in literacy achievements between different sections of populations, based on gender and residence.

Table 2: Growth of literacy in India 1951-2001

Year	Total	Male	Female	Sex disparity
1951	16.67	24.95	7.93	0.54
1961	24.02	34.44	12.95	0.48
1971	29.45	39.45	18.69	0.38
1981	36.23	46.89	24.82	0.33
1991	42.49	52.68	32.52	0.27
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	0.22

Note: Literacy rate for 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 related to population aged 5 and above. Literacy rate of 1991 and 2001 related to population aged 7 and above.

Source: Census of India, 2001, Provisional Population Totals.

Enrolment and Participation

Since Independence, there has been a substantial increase in enrolment at all levels of education (Table 3).

Table 3: Gross Enrolment Ratios(GER) at Primary and Upper Primary Levels

Year	*Primary (grades I-V)*			*Upper-Primary (grades V-VIII)*			*Elementary (grades I-VIII)*		
	Boys	***Girls***	***Total***	***Boys***	***Girls***	***Total***	***Boys***	***Girls***	***Total***
1950-51	**60.6**	**24.8**	**42.6**	**20.6**	**4.6**	**12.7**	**46.4**	**17.7**	**32.1**
1960-61	**82.6**	**41.4**	**62.4**	**33.2**	**11.3**	**22.5**	**65.2**	**30.9**	**48.7**
1970-71	**92.6**	**59.1**	**76.4**	**46.5**	**20.8**	**34.2**	**75.5**	**44.4**	**61.9**
1999-00	**104.1**	**85.2**	**94.9**	**67.2**	**49.7**	**58.8**	**90.1**	**72.0**	**81.3**
2000-01	**107.3**	**85.8**	**96.8**	**76.2**	**53.3**	**65.3**	**97.3**	**75.5**	**86.8**
2001-02	**103.1**	**82.3**	**93.0**	**80.3**	**57.7**	**69.6**	**95.7**	**74.6**	**85.6**
2002-03	**101.4**	**89.4**	**95.6**	**63.2**	**48.6**	**56.3**	**87.1**	**74.4**	**81.1**
2003-04	**100.8**	**95.7**	**98.3**	**66.9**	**57.7**	**62.5**	**88.0**	**81.5**	**84.9**
2004-2005	**111.4**	**105.5**	**108.6**	**74.8**	**65.8**	**70.5**	**97.6**	**90.6**	**94.2**

Source : SES, MHRD

Since 1990, the gross enrolment ratios at the primary stage in the country as a whole and in most of its states exceed 100 per cent; there are quite a few states where the ratio is considerably lower. During this time the GER in some cases exceed the more than 100 percent. This happened because the counts of over- and under- aged children in the schools were not adjusted while calculating the GER. This problem still continues to be present in the system. The problem gets more complicated as the drop-out rates, in spite of a declining trend, continue to be high.

Participation in Elementary Education: A Socio-Economic Profile

The National Sample Survey provides valuable information on the reasons for non-enrolment and drop-out. Non-availability of schooling facilities seem to account for only 10 percent of the "never enrolled" in rural India and about 8 percent in urban India; the difference between the sexes is very small in rural but somewhat larger in the urban sector. However, nearly 30 percent of the persons, both in rural and urban India, gave the reason for "never enrolled" as being "not interested". The difference between the sexes here is large: A large proportion of "never enrolled" females gave this reason in comparison with the males.

About 52 percent of urban males and 29 percent of urban female could not

avail of the educational services because of participation in household economic activity and other economic reasons. Attending the domestic chores restrained around one percent males, both in rural as well as urban India, from enrolling as students. Most of the young females are denied access to education because they look after their little siblings as well as perform a large variety of domestic chores related to housekeeping. This was observed that with increase in per capita household income the proportion of currently "not enrolled" decreases.

Over a period of time, enrolment, both at the primary and upper levels of education, has increased significantly. This was because of various programs and schemes introduced at policy level, govt. level, as well as various programs initiated by NGOs. In the year 2004, the enrolment ratio (gross) reached to 90 and 71 per cent respectively at the primary and upper primary level of education. The percentage of girl's enrolment to the total enrolment at the primary and upper primary level of education in year 2004-05 was about 46.7 and 44.43 per cent. Despite improvement in retention rates, the drop out rate is still high at the primary and elementary level of education at 28.49 and 50.39 per cent respectively, in the year 2004-05. Along with retention, the learner's achievement across the country remained unsatisfactory and a cause of concern.

Table 4: Selected Education Indicators

Countries	Total Population 2004	Compulsory Education (age group)	EFA Development Index (EDI) 2004	Adult literacy rate 2000-2004	
				Total %	GPI (F/M)
India	1,087,124	6-14	0.789	61	0.65
World	6,374,924	…..	….	82	0.89

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, statistical tables; CRS online database, Table 2: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Table: Selected education indicators (contd.)

	Provision for age 3 and older
	Pre-primary education

Countries	Official pre-primary entry age (years)	Gross enrolment ratio (GER)			Age specific enrolment ratio (ASER)			Private enrollment as % of total enrolment	% of trained teachers	Pupil/ teacher ratios
		Total (%)	Total (%)	GPI (F/M)	age 3 (%)	age 4 (%)	age 5 (%)			
	2004	1999	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004
India	3	20	36	1	(3)	(4)	(9)	….	….	41
World	….	33	37	0.97	…	…	…	39	….	18

Sources: Carr-Hill (2006); Education Policy and Data Center (2006); EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, statistical tables; ILO (2006); Kamerman (2005); Nonoyama et al. (2006); UNESCO-IBE (2006);UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Table: Selected education indicators (contd.)

	Primary Education							
Countries	Age group	NER total (%)		GER's GPI (F/M)		Survival rate to last grade Total (%)	% of female teachers	pupil/ teacher ratio
	2004	1999	2004	1999	2004	2003	2004	2004
India	6-10	….	90	0.82	0.93	79	44	40
World	….	83	86	0.92	0.94	87	74	21

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, statistical tables; CRS online database, Table 2; UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Table: Selected education indicators (contd.)

	Secondary Education -Gross enrolment ratio (GER)	Tertiary Education	Education Finance

Countries	Lower Secondary GER		Upper Secondary		Total Secondary		GER		Total public expenditure on Education as % of GNP	Aid to education per capita (constant 2003 US $)
	total %	GPI (F/M)	total %	GPI (F/M)	total %	GPI (F/M)	total %	GPI (F/M)		Annual average 2003-04
	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	
India	71	0.84	40	0.75	54	0.8	12	0.66	3.3	0.4
World	78	0.94	51	0.94	65	0.94	24	1.03	4.8	….

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, statistical tables; CRS online database, Table 2; UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

EFA in the Indian context

In the Indian context Education for All (ELL) would imply:

i. Expansion of early childhood care and development activities including family and communities, especially for poor, disadvantaged and children.

ii. Universal Elementary Education (UEE) , viewed as a composite programme of access to elementary education for all children up to 14 years of age; universal participation till they complete the elementary stage through formal or non-formal education programme; and universal achievement of atleast the minimum levels of learning.

iii. Drastic reduction in illiteracy, particularly in the age of 15-35 age group, bringing the literacy level in this age group at least to 80 percent in each gender and for every identified disadvantaged group, ensuring that the levels of three R's are relevant to the living and working conditions of the people.

iv. Provision of opportunities to maintain, use and upgrade their education, and provision for the facilities for developments of skills, to all persons who are functionally literate and those who have received primary education through the formal and non-formal channels.

v. Creation of necessary structure and setting in motion processes which would empower and make education an instrument of women's equality.

vi. Improving the content and process of education, people's culture and their living and working conditions, thereby enhancing their ability to learn and cope with problems of livelihood and environment.

Schemes and programme, in pursuance of national policy of education:

The goals and objectives of Education for All in India are as follows (MHRD, Annual Report: 1997-98):

Access: Universal enrolment of all children, including girls and persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; Provision of primary school for all children within one kilometer of walking distance and of facility of non-formal education; and Improvement of ratio of primary to upper primary school to at least 1:2. Various schemes were introduced to improve the enrolment, one of the prominent one was the mid-day meal.

***Retention*:** Reduction of dropout rates between Classes I to V and I to VIII; and Improvement of school facilities by revamped Operation Blackboard, to be extended to upper primary level also. Policy of no detention up to the Grade V was introduced.

***Achievement*:** Achievement of minimum levels of learning by approximately all children at the primary level, and introduction of this concept at the middle stage on a large scale.

***Monitoring*:** Local level committee, with due representation to women and teachers, to assist in the working of primary education to oversee its functioning; and Improvement of the monitoring system for universalisation of elementary education.

In accordance with the constitutional commitment to ensure free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, provision of universal elementary education has been a salient feature of national policy since

independence. This resolve has been spelt out emphatically in the National Policy since independence National policy of Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA) 1992. Over the years, number of schemes and programmes were launched in pursuance of the emphasis embodied in the NPE and the POA. These included the scheme of Non Formal Education (NFE); Operation Blackboard (OB); Teacher Education (TE); Mahila Samakhya (MS); State specific Basic Education Projects like the Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP); Bihar Education Project (BEP), Utter Pradesh Basic Education Project, Lok Jumbish (LJP) in Rajasthan; National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (MDM); District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Education Grantee Scheme, Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL).

- ***Non-Formal Education***

The *Non-Formal Education* (NFE) scheme was initiated in 1979 for the children of 6-14 years of age, who remain outside the formal education system due to various reasons. NFE cater learning needs of working children and children in difficult circumstances.

The scheme is recently revised and named as *Scheme of Alternative and Innovative Education.* The scheme envisages that all habitations that do not have an elementary education centre within a radius of one kilometre will have one at the earliest. As a part of the scheme, school-mapping exercise will be conducted to identify school-less habitations, which will help to locate habitations where alternative centers are to be provided.

- ***The Scheme of Operation Blackboard***

The scheme of *Operation Blackboard* (OB) was launched in 1987 to improve facilities in schools. The scheme had three components, namely (i) an additional teacher to single teacher primary schools; (ii) providing at least two classrooms in each primary school; and (iii) providing teaching-learning equipment to all primary schools. The OB Scheme seeks to bring both the

quantitative and qualitative improvements in primary education. During the Ninth Plan, third teacher was provided to more than 22 thousand schools and this scheme covered around 78 thousand upper primary schools and to these schools new teaching-learning materials were supplied.

- ***District Institutes of Education and Training***

The scheme to strengthen teacher education by establishing quality training institutions, such as, the *District Institutes of Education and Training* (DIET) was initiated in 1987. The scheme proposed to create viable institutional, academic and technical resource base for orientations, training and continuous up-gradation of knowledge, competence and pedagogical skills of school teachers' in the country.

- ***Mahila Samakhya***

The Mahila Samakhya Programme began in 1988 with the broad objective of creating an environment that would promote women's and girls education, wherein poor women would be enabled to identify and overcome the socio-cultural and systemic barriers that inhibit their participation in the education process. Over these past 18 years, the programme itself has gained an understanding of the approach and strategies that facilitate marginalized women in rural areas to take greater control of their lives and to ensure a learning environment for themselves and their daughters. The learning process involves information and capacity building, developing analytical, decision-making, leadership capabilities, and facilitating the agency of women to address their problems, to make informed choices and collectively act to bring about change. The educational strategy is built around the issues / needs as articulated by Sangha / Federation women – with a focus on legal literacy (rights and entitlements), health and nutritional education, political education (focus on women in the political process), education for livelihoods, environmental education and basic literacy. The effectiveness of the MS approach and strategy in mobilizing poor rural women around education issues has been consistently commended by successive programme evaluations.

A recent National Evaluation of the programme in 2004 and its key findings substantiate claims of a) reaching the poorest women (primarily from the SC/ST

communities and women working as agricultural labor) in its project areas, and in many cases women who have not been reached by other development initiatives b) a positive response of poor women to the programme efforts to enable their mobilization and participation in the public domain c) among sangha women, there is a significant increase in the awareness levels and understanding of rights and entitlements , as well as government programmes, schemes and resource allocations for women and girls d) sanghas and federations are quick to raise their voice and act against violence against women, child marriages and in Karnataka and AP ,against the devadasi system, e) the alternative structures such as the Nari Adalats/ Mahila Panch/ Mahila Court (women's court) managed and run by the sanghas, have gained in credibility and recognition at the community level as effective alternative justice redressal mechanisms and f) the impact of women's mobilization and empowerment is very evident in the decisions taken to educate girls . The voluntary participation of poor women (the programme offers no incentives), to come together in collectives, address social discrimination and gender barriers, and to ensure education of women and girls, is of particular significance.

- ***Total Literacy Campaigns***

The significant improvement in literacy rates during 1991 to 1998 is because of the measures that have been initiated during this period. The literacy programmes in India are managed by the *National Literacy Mission* (NLM) launched in 1992 with an aim to make 100 million literates of the age group 15-35 years by the turn of the century i.e. 1999. Based on the Ernakulam experience in mobilizing society in the affairs of literacy programs, the NLM launched *Total Literacy Campaigns* in a large number of districts. Since then a number of districts have become total literate districts. The achievement is also because of the fact that during 1990's, a number of innovative projects and programmes were initiated.

The *Total Literacy Campaigns* mobilize communities and contributed to greater participation of children in schools. The uniqueness of the TLC lies in the fact that it is delivered through voluntarism. The programme is being implemented through the *Zilla (district) Saksharata Samities* created for the

purpose.

A little less than 50 per cent of the total population in 1991 was illiterate but since than the country has made considerable progress both in terms of total (7+ population) and adult literacy (15+) rates.

- ***District Primary Education Programme (DPEP):***

The World Bank assisted District Primary Education Programme was launched in 1994 in 42 districts of seven states is currently under implementation in about 150 districts spread over fifteen states. The main objectives of DPEP programme are as follows:

Emphasizing local area planning with district plans being formulated in their own right instead of being derived from a state plan project document;

Infusing greater rigor and professional inputs in planning and appraisal;

More focused targeting educationally ward districts and districts where total literacy campaign have been successful;

More focused coverage would initially focus on primary stage (Classes I-V and its NFE equivalent) with stress on girls and for socially disadvantaged groups; and

Emphasizing capacity building and networking of district, states and national level institutes in the fields of education management and social services to provide the resource support for the programme.

To make 'education for all' successful substantial efforts needed to be made. And this task was challenging given the huge number of target population. First and most important task was to have the reliable information on what is the number we are addressing and how much is already been addressed. To study the progress in EFA, reliability of data on education remained the major cause of concern of the data users. To strengthen information system, among which the development of computerized information system under the centrally sponsored *District Primary Education Programme* (DPEP) is the most prominent and sincere one. *It may however be noted that data on learner's achievement is not available on regular basis.* It is only in the recent past (1994) that achievement tests were conducted under the

District Primary Education Programme through the *Baseline Assessment Surveys* (BAS).

- ***State specific Basic Education Projects:***

The state specific basic education projects in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project), Bihar (Bihar Education Project), Uttar Pradesh (Uttar Pradesh Basic Shiksha Project), Rajasthan (Lok Jumbish & Shiksha Karmi), and the District Primary Education Programme are of recent origin.

Decentralized planning in a project mode, disaggregated target setting, community mobilization through Village Education Committees, participative planning process and autonomy to set targets, priorities and strategies are some of the salient features of DPEP. The programme however confines to only primary level but the Government of India at present is thinking seriously to upgrade it to the upper primary level initially in phases in few districts. Also under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, provisions are made to cover the entire elementary level.

Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP)

In 1983, India obtained assistance from the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) of U.K. for implementing the Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project (APPEP). This project is aimed at the quality improvement of primary education in the project area. The scope of this project did not cover certain components of basic education such as, non-formal education and the focus on education for girls. Instead, the project emphasized the enhancement of the teacher's and the supervisor's professional competence, and assisted in the construction of primary school buildings.

Bihar Education Project (BEP)

The Bihar Education Project (BEP) represent the first major attempt in India to include the board range of national EFA concerns, issues, approaches, and strategies in one large-scale operational program. The Government of India, the state of Government of Bihar, NGO's teacher representatives and distinguished

women and educationists are represented in these bodies so that planning and monitoring are done in a participatory manner. This project covers all components of elementary education and expanded in a phased manner in 20 districts. Village Education Committees play an important role in the implementation of the project at the village level. Initially this project emphasized mobilization and literacy activities in 1991, which has shifted the focus to primary education.

Utter Pradesh Basic Education Project

The Utter Pradesh Basic Education Project also implemented a participative state level autonomous society, with the Vernacular Education Centers (VECs) playing an active role in the implementation of the projects at the grass-roots level. This project is the first major primary education project funded by the World Bank in India. The project attempts to operationalise the concepts of school complexes to provide resource support to schools.

Lok Jumbish

Lok Jumbish (literally translated as People's Movement) began as an idea of retired civil servant, Anatil Bordia to mobilize greater public support for education. The original idea was to address the problem of low community interest in education through involving community members in a school mapping process. In doing so, the program stressed the responsibility community members had in preparing and implementing the school development program. Since then, the project management structure set up for school mapping have formed the basis for series of other activities which target specific needs within the education sector.

Box 1; Lok Jumbish- People's movement

This project was implemented in Rajasthan since 1992, which is one of the most educationally backward states of India. This project was funded by Swedish International Development Authority. The main objective of LJP is to achieve EFA through people's mobilization and participation.

Some of the main strategies used in Lok Jumbish were:

Environment Building: mobilization of the community for the program through

rallies, cultural programs and folk media such as songs, dances plays and puppet shows.

People's Participation: mobilization of the village community to undertake micro-planning, support for community action to ensure all children are in school, and accountability of the education system.

Decentralized Management: devolvement of decision making to block and village level.

Involvement of Teachers: restoration of teachers' status and their own pride in their profession, also the involvement of teachers' organizations in decision making.

Training of Personnel: training for teachers to support educational reform, and training of community members to enable them to play their roles effectively.

Quality Improvement: improvement of teacher performance, norm-based facilities (e.g. cleaning standards are set for Lok Jumbish schools), modifications to curriculum and pedagogy.

Evaluation: continuity and in-built activity through instructional and school management practice.

A Coherent Gender Strategy: mainstreaming gender equity in all aspects of the program activities. The needs of women and girls was given the priority. Promotion of equal numbers of women at all levels. Special support given for developing women staff and practical needs of women and girls recognized at all levels. Gender sensitive training for all stakeholders and active steps taken for the prevention of sexual harassment. Various approaches were development towards gender sensitive teaching.

In the Lok Jumbish program a Women Teachers' Forum is created to boost the participation of women teachers in residential training camps and to encourage them to become trainers. Women require support and encouragement to break powerful social norms and to adopt a teaching career.

Lok Jumbish has also developed specific responses to problem situations e.g.

Problem: Few teachers are willing to take up posts in remote parts of Rajasthan.

Response: Muktaks (literally "one who practices freedom of action") are recruited in pairs, given about 60 days training in basic pedagogy, confidence building and community participation approaches and are then sent to the rural areas to open Muktagans – open schools which allow students to visit school around their work schedule. Initial evaluations suggest that teachers in these schools have high levels of commitment.

Problem: Adolescent girls tend to drop out of school.

Response: Adolescent girls' camps which impart basic literacy skills and promote health and hygiene issues. Community support for the camps is built through a variety of "environment building" strategies.

Problem: Low levels of literacy and low self esteem among large numbers of women within the communities.

Response: Women's Residential Institutes of Training and Education (WRITE) in which women engage in basic education activities in a stimulating and nurturing environment.

Shiksha Karmi Projects :

(Creating an informal cadre of women teachers in Rajasthan)

Shiksha Karmi project is another important programme, which have, received attention at the international level and was funded by Swedish International Development Authority. SKP focuses its attention on universalisation and qualitative improvement of primary education in remote, arid areas and socio-economically backward villages with primary attention given to girls.

The appointment of women teachers has been an important part of the educational discourse in India, and in Rajasthan in particular. In a state where segregation of men and women is strictly practiced and purdah (the system of screening women from men and strangers by means of a veil or curtain) enforced, one of the major constraints to the enrolment of girls has been the absence of women teachers in schools located in remote areas.

There were no women teachers identified in the Shikshakarmi Pilot Project implemented in l984. The initial document clearly stated the principle of two Shikshakarmis, one man and one woman in each village. It was felt that the

presence of women Shikshakarmis in the village could help to create an environment that would be more conducive to encouraging girls to enroll in the schools. However, identifying and retaining women teachers continues to be challenging, requiring sensitive handling. A series of problems are faced by women Shikshakarmis, some of which are of a serious nature. Teaching is a not a traditional occupation for women in rural Rajasthan, unlike in the urban areas. The Mahila Shikshakarmis have had to struggle to establish themselves as teachers, while simultaneously attaining approval from the family and village elders for this role. The fact that women teachers are required to travel outside their villages for training/workshop meetings and to interact with males and children from different castes has necessitated a change in the rules and norms governing households, the community and to some extent, the school environment. In general, where a woman is expected to cover her face and observe purdah in the presence of 'elders' and community men, the woman Shikshakarmi's role represents a step towards equality. It is also evident that the new role has enhanced her personal status and given her a sense of freedom. The Mahila Prasikshan Kendras (training centres for women) were intended to increase the number of women teachers and thus the enrolment of girls in the project schools. They have shown that, given a supportive environment, women can be motivated to become learners. The first internal evaluation carried out by the Shikshakarmi Board in 1992 indicated that most women joined the centres as an opportunity to study and become self-reliant.

- ***National Programme for Nutritional Support (Mid-day Meal)***

The *National Programme for Nutritional Support* to *Primary Education* (launched in 1995) provides food grains/cooked meals to children in primary classes. The programme assures 100 grams of food grains per day for children attending schools for at least 80 per cent of the total school days in a month. Annual Report: MHRD, 1999-2000 states that 9.90 million children were covered under the scheme and allocated 2.71 million metric tones of food grains in that year. Along with teachers, the local community is also given responsibility in the distribution of food grains.

Box 2: MID-DAY MEALS: snap shot from Karnataka

School meals make slow progress

In 2001, the Supreme Court ordered that the states should provide cooked meals for all school-children up to the fifth standard. The primary objective was to retain the students in the classrooms, rather than lose them to hunger and family pressures for additional income. Four years later, in the southern states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the statistics show that this primary objective has been met. School authorities say, and the records show, that while enrolment has not been substantially improved as a result of the meal programmes, school attendance has certainly gone up by 10-12%. However, there is plenty of room for improvement in the management of the scheme, and in maintaining the quality of the food provided.

The introduction of mid-day meals scheme (MMS) was the result of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Rajasthan, before the Supreme Court. The case was filed initially against the Government of India, Food Corporation of India (FCI) and six state governments, alleging that more than 50 million tonnes of food grains was stocked up with FCI while there was widespread hunger in the country, particularly in the drought-hit states of Rajasthan and Orissa. Eventually the list of respondents was extended to include all the States and Union Territories. The Supreme Court issued an order asking the states to implement eight different centrally-sponsored schemes for food security and to introduce cooked mid-day meals in all the government and government-aided schools. Later, in 2003, the Government of India announced that the scheme would thereafter cover students up to the seventh standard.

Karnataka

The Karnataka government began its mid-day meals scheme in June 2002. Initially, the programme was limited to seven backward districts of the state - Raichur, Koppala, Gulbarga, Bidar, Bellary, Bagalakote and Bijapur. Later, in 2003 under the ambitious "Akshara Dasoha" programme, the remaining 20 districts were also included in the scheme. By the year 2005-06 the programme covered close to five lakh government schools and nearly seven lakh government-aided schools in the state. The government had budgeted Re.1 per child per meal initially; this was raised to Rs.1.31 per student per day subsequently. This is the lowest amount spent per child among the southern states. Each child gets 100 grams of rice per day from the FCI under this scheme.

Picture: A self-help group member serving children in Anantapuram.

Records at the Department of Public Instruction show that school attendance has improved since the introduction of the scheme by 2-10% across the state. The attendance registers at schools corroborate this data. But a closer look at a few of the many government schools benefiting from the programme shows there is considerable room for improvement in the implementation.

The Government High School in Ghousianagar, Mysore, tells the tale of loopholes in the scheme. This school, with a thousand students, does not have a kitchen for the meals to be cooked. To overcome this difficulty, one of the classrooms has been converted into a kitchen, but this means that the students are crammed into smaller classrooms. Nor does the school have regular water supply; Chandrashekar, the Headmaster, says during my visit that "We have not got water for the last three days. This happens quite often here, and we have to get water from far away places." Then there is the problem of under-staffing; for a thousand-strong student population, there are only four cooks and assistants. This means that the teachers even have to spend considerable amount of time in overseeing the preparations and even serving the meals on a daily basis. Chandrashekar says they lose 80 minutes of school time every day because of this.

The situation improved when the state government decided to rope in NGOs to prepare the meals at a central kitchen and supply them to the schools. Bangalore-based ISKCON's *Akshaya Patra* is one of the most successful private sector participation programmes of this kind. *Samarthanam*, a trust for the disabled in Bangalore, is another organisation that is participating in this programme. They started with 3500 students in the year 2003-04 and are currently providing food for nearly 23,000 students in and around Bangalore and Anekal. There are currently 38 NGOs participating in the 'Akshara Dasoha' programme, covering 1001 schools. But even this arrangement has not been without problems.

Even when NGOs step in to fill the void in the government's delivery of the

MMS, there are problems. H P Vernaker, Programme Coordinator of Samarthanam, says "the money given by the government is not sufficient, and sometimes does not come on time. But we cannot stop giving food to the children, so we make up for the costs through donations from some corporates and individuals." And not all NGOs are reliable or trustworthy; 800 students of the Government Primary and Middle School in Hebbagodi village in Anekal taluk had to eat insipid and unhygienic meals for nearly a year before the authorities took notice and cancelled the permits given to the NGO to serve the mid-day meals.

Caste problems, too, are never far away from the MMS. The cooks employed are mostly Dalit women; their appointment has cooks has not worked in favour of the mid-day meals scheme. In many villages, upper caste members have refused to allow their children to consume meals prepared by Dalit cooks.

- **Sarva Shiksha Adhiyan (SSA)**

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a historic stride towards achieving the long cherished goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) through a time bound integrated approach, in partnership with States. SSA, which promises to change the face of the elementary education sector of the country, aims to provide useful and quality Elementary Education to all children in the 6-14 age groups by 2010.

The SSA is an effort to recognize the need for improving the performance of the school system and to provide community owned quality elementary education in the mission mode. It also envisages bridging of gender and social gaps.

Objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:

- All children in school, Education Grantee Centre, Alternative School, or 'Back to School' camp by 2003;
- All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;
- All children compete eight years of schooling by 2010;
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life;
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at

Elementary education level by 2010;

- Universal retention by 2010.

Components of SSA:

The components of SSA includes appointment of teachers, teacher training, qualitative improvement of elementary education, provision of teaching learning materials, establishment of Block and Cluster Resource Centers for academic support, construction of Classrooms and school buildings, establishment of education guarantee centers, integrated education of the disabled and distance education.

- ***Education Grantee Scheme***

The EGS centers in Tamilnadu deserve special mention as an important new initiative in the 1990s. The remarkable success of EGS has drawn the attention of planners and policy maker and many program on similar line was initiated in the year 2004-05. The EGS centers covered 6-11 age groups who did not ever attend the school. The key factors on which EGS hinges are community demand and government guarantee. By projecting community demand as a start-up point, EGS addresses the issue of enrollment and retention. The EGS is seen as successful mode of reaching the unreached or the 'hard to reach'.

Many of the EGS centers run by NGOs. Duration of the programme is kept at 60-75 days in a year. School hours kept are around two to three hours. The number of students per class was kept between 20 and 40; depending upon the facilities (teacher, and other administrative arrangements) which were available in that respective area. Most of the staff/ teachers in this project have undergone the strategy planning workshop. Every eight to ten schools were assigned separate supervisors. Teaching – Learning Materials was prepared separately in Collaboration with NGOs.

- ***Minimum Levels of Learning:***

Significant effort towards specification of Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) were made by the NCERT during 1978 in connection with the UNICEF

assisted projects on 'Primary Education Curriculum Renewal (PECR)' and 'Developmental Activities in Community Education and Participation'. As a part of these projects, a "Minimum Learning Continuum' was drawn indicating the learning outcomes expected to be achieved by all children completing classes II, III, IV and V. The PECR was evaluated in 1984 using a set of achievement tests developed for all the primary classes based on the competences specified in the Minimum Learning Continuum. Utilizing the empirical evidences collected through this evaluation study the NCERT prepared another document entitled, 'Minimum Levels of Learning at the Primary Stage'. To take the concerted steps to achieve these levels in institutions got a boost after NPE, 1986. A further momentum was provided by the World conference on EFA, held in Jomtein, in March 1990, which emphasized learning achievement. The report of a committee, set up by the Govt. in 1991, under the chairmanship of Prof. R. H. Dave provides a framework and a coherent strategy for achieving MLLs.

Global commitment

The Education for All movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. The movement was launched at the *World Conference on Education for All* in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, when representatives of the international community agreed to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade.

Ten years later, with many countries far from having reached this goal, the international community met again 2000, in Dakar, Senegal, and affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All by the year 2015. They identified six key education goals which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

The six goals are:

Goal 1- Expand early childhood care and education: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Goal 2- Provide free and compulsory primary education for all: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult

circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Goal 3- Promote learning and life skill for young people and adults: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.

Goal 4- Increase adult literacy by 50 percent: Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Goal 5- Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Goal 6- Improve the quality of education: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Out of these goals, three are timed targets attached: to see every child completing a quality basic education, to increase literacy levels by fifty percent and to ensure gender equity in education – all by 2015. This meant that governments, aid agencies, civil society and non-governmental organisations, communities, teachers and parents needed to work harder and better and make education a priority. Basic education is an indispensable condition for meeting other development targets, such as the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals.

In effort to translate EFA goals identified at international level at Dakar, India too made a plan of action to achieve the EFA goals.

Meeting Dakar Goals: The Indian Perspectives

- Integrated Child Development Schemes being universalised- ECCE is an important component of the Scheme **(Goal-1)**

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Movement for Education for All) launched with the aim of providing 8 years of quality education to all children in the age group 6-14 by 2010 **(Goal 2 & 6)**
- A comprehensive plan for adolescents, especially girls, in the 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) **(Goal 3)**
- National Literacy Mission to provide functional literacy to all illiterates adults in the age group 15-35 **(Goal 3 & 4)** Achieve sustainable threshold level of 75% literacy by 2007
- Special schemes targeted at girls, apart from general schemes, Removal of all disparities, including gender, in primary (class I-V) by 2007 and elementary (I-VIII) by 2010 **(Goal 5)**

Table 5: % Girls to Total Enrolment by Stages

Year	Primary	Upper primary
1999-2000	43.6	40.4
2000-2001	43.8	40.9
2001-2002	44.2	41.7
2002-2003	46.8	43.9
2003-2004	46.7	43.9
2004-2005	46.7	44.43

EFA global monitoring report in 2003-04 mentioned that India is "At risk of not achieving the goal gender parity by 2015" either in primary education or secondary education or at both levels. Even after making progress in so many fields, contemplating that we cannot have gender parity even by 2015 is extremely disappointing. This makes us rethink all the efforts people are making- individual level as well organization level.

The goals of Education for All (EFA) are centrally concerned with equality. If children are excluded from access to education, they are denied their human rights and prevented from developing their talents and interests in the most basic of ways. It is also in the fundamental interests of society to see that this happens – progress with economic and social development depends upon it.

Nevertheless, millions of children still fail to gain access to schooling, and even larger numbers among those who do enroll leave prematurely, dropping out before the skills of literacy and number skills have been properly gained. A

majority of such children are girls.

The World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 adopted six major goals for education, two of which also became Millennium Development Goals later in the same year. The Dakar goals covered the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender equality, improving literacy and educational quality, and increasing life-skills and early childhood education programmes, and were to be achieved within 15 years. However, the gender goal was judged to be particularly urgent – requiring the achievement of parity in enrolments for girls and boys at primary and secondary levels by 2005, and of full equality throughout education by 2015.

In society do women yet enjoy the same opportunities as men. They work longer hours and they are paid less; their life chances and choices are more restricted than for men. Girls' unequal access to, and performance in education is both a cause and a consequence of these disparities. The next section focuses on the main dimensions of these educational inequalities and pinpoints strategies to overcome them.

Why girls are still held back?

What holds girls back? A three-step rights agenda provides a framework for understanding the multiple dimensions of inequalities, both outside and within the school. First, a concern with *rights to* education points to constraints in the family and within society that affect girls' access to education. Second, *rights within* education invite a focus on how school systems take girls' specific needs into account through curricula, teaching methods and the learning environment. Finally, *rights through* education raise the issues of how girls perform in school and the extent to which achievement translates into equal opportunities in the social and economic spheres. Gender inequalities can only be addressed by taking all three dimensions into account.

* ***Rights to education: what happens outside school***

The critically important locus for decision making as regards participation in schooling is the family. It is here that notions of gender relations are transmitted from one generation to the next. This happens implicitly via the gender roles that members of the household themselves fulfill, and explicitly by

consequence of the gender frameworks within which children of each sex are brought up. Households allocate time for different activities among their members, and they also allocate resources – for consumption, savings and investment, including those associated with the formation of human capital – between each of them.

How power is shared within the household reflects society-wide norms. The most marked gender inequalities are found in societies where women are confined to the home.

Such societies are characterized by marked son preference and discrimination against daughters from the early years of life. Regions where there is strong cultural preference for sons also tend to have the greatest levels of gender inequalities. In these places, inequalities can take extreme life-threatening forms. Gender inequalities in education, in such societies are simply one aspect of a generalized and systematic discrimination against women and girls, and is partly mirror regional variations.

In India, it is also significant that the northern states generally had higher levels of fertility, lower levels of contraceptive use, lower levels of female labour-force participation and more marked son-preference than states in the south.

This regional pattern confounds the relationship between economic development and gender equality at the 'state' level. Thus, the states of Punjab and Haryana in northern India reported the highest state-level per capita incomes in 1981 as well as some of the lowest sex ratios (around 870 women to 1,000 men) whereas the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, both southern states with lower per capita incomes, reported sex ratios of 1,032 and 977, respectively. The relationship between gender equality and poverty is further complicated by caste. Historical evidence and contemporary data all confirm that gender discrimination is particularly marked among the propertied castes in northern India.

* ***Working children: a major brake on schooling***

The need for children to work – the source of the opportunity costs of school attendance – has been shown to be one of the most important causes of under-enrolment in school.

One of the most common reasons for children not attending school is that their families require them to work. According to the most recent estimates, 18% of children aged 5–14 are economically active. It is safe to assume that the true figure for all working children is considerably greater because it does not include children engaged in domestic chores and other household work not leading to marketable output.

The vast majority are engaged in agricultural work, typically on family-run farms. Many children combine this work with attending school, even though there is an obvious trade-off in terms of attendance and achievement.

Parents are the main employers of children. Affecting their circumstances and attitudes provides a major challenge for education. Child labour falls as economic development proceeds, and its existence is undoubtedly a result of poverty. Recent research also shows that, where child labour exists, its incidence is lowest where power is equally divided between husbands and wives. Some of the studies also suggest that children work less and study more in households where the mother has more influence in decision-making.

All this shows that measures to reduce oe remove the need for child labour represent a potentially important means of increasing school enrolment among both grils and boys.

However, one weakness of most discussions of such policy interventions is that they fail to recognize the predominance of household employment among child workers. This reflects the strong media coverage given to children employed in export sectors such as the carpet, garment and sports-equipment industries. This emphasis typically leads to proposals for trade sanctions, for adherence to international labour standards and for minimum wages. Yet to the extent that the parents of child labourers are self-employed, an adult minimum wage will have, at best, indirect effects on child labour. Some of the schemes in education which encourage children, especially girl child to attend schools were also framed and executed:

- Scholarships for girls
- Income support schemes
- School feeding programmes

Change does not require only the investment of resources to develop infrastructure, it also needs investment in consultation, community participation

and the creative development of solutions. Good examples of this come from Rajasthan in India, where community initiatives have enabled girls who would otherwise miss out on school to attend. In the Shikshakarmi Project, a *mahila sahyogi* (woman helper/escort) is appointed to enable young girls to attend school. The *mahila sahyogi* is a local woman who collects these children from their homes, escorting them to the school and back. She also provides childcare during school hours. With this additional support, girls' attendance at schools receives a boost.

* ***In the name of tradition***

Social norms play a significant role in explaining why and how gender differentiation occurs, how it becomes legitimized through divisions of labour between men and women, and how this division of labour results in the contributions of girls and boys being valued differently. Norms of female dependence on males are institutionalized through a range of social mechanisms so that they come to appear natural and immutable. These norms are usually stubborn, but they can be challenged through pro-active measures.

Early marriage massively impedes the educational progress of girls, whether it occurs so as to lighten a family's economic burden or to secure a daughter's future. In these circumstances, early marriage (at age 15 or 16) becomes a reason to leave school. This massively impedes the educational progress of girls. In India data of year1996 show that 38% of girls aged 15–19 were married.

Average age for marriage? (not the one law says): Changing the legal age of marriage is unlikely to alter local practices if underlying conditions are not changed. This is why promoting the importance of girls' education through campaigns, role models, improving conditions of safety and securities, and working directly with adolescent girls to strengthen their voice, are important measures to allow them to complete an education.

* ***Disability***

UNESCO suggests that 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. Poverty and disability also form a vicious circle: women and girls, in the face of limited resources, are more likely than their male counterparts to be deprived of basic necessities, such as food and medicine,

increasing the risk of physical or mental impairment. The education of girls with disabilities has gone largely unnoticed by those committed to promoting either gender equity or disability equity. Little policy attention has been paid, for example, to the combined sexual and disability harassment faced by female pupils.

* ***Cost of schooling***

Even thought in India primary education is free for all till age 14, other costs, such as books, school uniform, transport or community contributions, are added to these. Even where direct costs do not serve as a barrier, it is well documented that the distance of school from home influences enrolment. Remote habitations and dispersed populations continue to suffer disadvantages that affect girls more severely as parents fear for their daughters' safety on the way to school.

School infrastructure is all too often unsuitable: the availability of separate toilets is particularly decisive for menstruating girls. As with reducing distance between school and home, the case for investing in water, toilets and basic school infrastructure is most persuasively made by governments that, having done so, have experienced remarkable progress in closing gender gaps and universalizing education.

* ***Women teachers as role models***

The importance of female role models is widely accepted as a means of promoting greater gender equality: they expand the aspirations of young girls, and demonstrate that barriers to female advancement are usually socially constructed rather than reflecting their different capacities or interests. While the number of female teachers has increased gradually in India, the proportion remains extremely low in most parts of the country.

Can non-state providers boost girls' education?

NGOs can be major contributors and are generally committed to ensuring that education reaches the poorest, most disadvantaged groups. This landscape also includes commercial providers – a rapidly growing sector – and community groups such as religious bodies.

Private schools are still mainly limited to the economically advantaged

group. And private schooling for girls is largely associated with higher income levels.

Community schools are often portrayed as being more relevant to local development, more cost effective, and more accountable than public schools. Several studies report their success in improving access to schooling lead to a rise in girls' enrolment. Innovative programmes, however, can increase the direct costs that households face and exacerbate gender inequalities. Communities may have to meet the cost of teachers' salaries.

Although the religious sector can contribute strongly to boosting parity for girls, its institutions are essentially conservative and their impact on equality is thus less certain.

Assessing the extent to which girls are held back at each stage of the rights agenda – in the home and society, by schooling costs and biases, lack of security, unfair treatment and lack of opportunity – leads to a set of challenges. But achieving parity does not end with equal numbers: equal opportunities, treatment and outcomes in education and in society are all crucial yardsticks of progress.

It was realized that to improve the quality of teaching /schooling various innovation is required. The concept of 'alternative schooling' is a need to be explored. In India as we have limited resources in term on spending money on school buildings with many rooms, paying good salaries to teachers. Moreover recruiting qualified teachers is another crisis. To overcome the difficulty in many regions various organizations come up with the concept of 'alternative schooling'. One of which is at ***Rishi valley for rural schools*** in south India. They tried with the concept of 'self-learning' and 'learning-ladder' approach. A learning ladder has been evolved, self-learning material created and children work on their own or in groups, marking their own progress as they go along.

Another effort was tried was the '***autonomy of learning***' and '***multi-level***' approach. Emerging from the work of David Horsburgh and then in greater detail through the work of two NGOs in Jaipur, Rajasthan—**Digantar** and **Bodh**. Here emphasis was given on a learning continuum where a child moves through a loosely grade system at her own pace. Here it was recognised that, with over 94% teachers teaching more than one class at a time, the multi-grade situation is a normal situation rather than an exceptional one.

In the year 1998-99, Subir Shukla worked with schools in Gujarat on the project of **Eklavya,** a 'multi-grade pedagogy for Gujarat'. Similar work by Subir Shukla was done in a Girls' Education Project in Hardoi (Uttar Pradesh), which are essentially single teacher schools run for girls in areas where schools are unlikely to open and which have local women recruited by the community as teachers, an effort has been made to get rid of these constraints by providing a material rich environment that also allows self-paced learning, and is tolerant of class sizes of up to 40+.

Innovative measures for out-of-school children

The MV Foundation, an NGO in Andhra Pradesh, India, began working with child workers and bonded children in 1991, to try and get them back into school. Given their early work experiences, the NGO found that both their educational and counselling needs could not be met by the formal school system. As a result, camps were organized in which the children were helped to catch up with their peers in formal schools. These camps were used to help the children make the transition from work to schooling and to encourage their parents to acknowledge the educational rights of their children.

The transition from work to school starts in the villages. The Foundation runs small 'motivation centres' where child workers and other out-of school children are invited to spend a few hours. The role of a 'motivator-teacher' is to interact with the families and to talk with them about their aspirations. Within a few weeks, children are usually ready to go to the camp, although it is reported to take a little longer to motivate the families of girls. Once there, within six to eighteen months, children achieve competency equivalent to Grade VII pupils. Children are grouped according to their pace of learning. Teachers trained by the Foundation live with the children and interact with them for much of the time. While the timing for classroom work is strictly observed, teaching and learning is a round-the-clock activity. As and when the children achieve Grade VII competency they are encouraged to take entrance tests for residential schools or are enrolled in the middle school near their village. A large number of children from the camps have successfully passed the public entrance examinations for enrolment in residential schools. Over the years since 1991 this programme has gained tremendous community support. Local communities offer both resources

and space to enable the bridge courses to run.

Bridge schools, organized either as residential camps or education centres within communities, appear to be a replicable, cost-effective mechanism for progress towards UPE. The benefits extend beyond the individual child to the community as a whole, because of the latter's involvement and ownership of the process of getting out-of-school children into schools. On the other hand, a partnership between NGOs and the government is needed to ensure that there are sufficient formal schools to meet the educational needs of the children who are integrated via the bridge programmes.

The MV Foundation also runs an education centre for girls and women in difficult circumstances. Those who have been battered, abused or have been through a difficult life are made welcome. The Government of Andhra Pradesh sends women from all parts of the state to the centre. Here the objective is not only to get them into formal schools, because many of the older women do not opt for formal schooling. The objective is to help them to overcome their personal problems and prepare themselves for a productive life. Building the self-esteem and self-confidence of such women is given priority.

The **Bodh school project** in the slums of Jaipur, Rajasthan, recognizes that education has an important function in social change, and that parental involvement is crucial. Local women's groups formed the link between school and neighborhood. Girls attending the primary school brought along their younger siblings they had to look after. Accordingly it was decided to add a pre-school to the project to provide quality care for the younger children and to release the elder sisters from this task. Teachers were recruited from existing women's groups and given training. Some adolescent girls became assistants to the mother teachers. Obviously, such strong links between ECCE and primary school contribute to a good transition between the two. Again, there are self-generated capacities, low costs, and multiple benefits.

MARG- Legal literacy in India: Believing that literacy alone is not sufficient to empower women, MARG (Multiple Action Research Group) started a project to educate women about their legal rights. The Delhi-based NGO developed a series of manuals on twenty-three laws which affected women's lives, using colour-coded covers to identify the subject matter: for example, red indicated marriage laws, blue signified citizens' rights versus the police. MARG ran three-day legal literacy workshops, acting as a resource to other community organizations (some of which were implementing non-formal education programmes). Both literate and non-literate women attended these workshops and through role-play, video and 'reading' the simple, clearly illustrated manuals, began to gain more awareness of their rights. For some older women, the experience of using the manuals as tools in the workshop inspired them to begin to attend literacy classes to learn to read more. The manuals provided support in the long term for women to take legal and social action: women labourers in Bihar learned about the Equal Remuneration Act, subsequently refusing to work in the fields until they were paid equal wages, while showing their employers the relevant sections in their manual as evidence. In another case, community members prevented a 14-year-old girl from being forcibly married after learning about the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

The Mahila Samakhya experience: While the education of women and girls has been central to national discourse in India for over a century, complex and deep-rooted barriers to women's access to education remain. It has been argued that it is only when women's agency is developed and empowered, to address these barriers themselves that the ground would be set for their participation in the education process. The Mahila Samakhya programme, working in several Indian districts, set out to do this, using innovative approaches. It saw the role of education as helping women to question rather than accept, in order to take control of their own lives; it also aimed to build conscious and independent collectives of women (*sanghas*) which are to initiate and sustain processes of social change. The programme design consciously moved away from conventional development approaches: no targets were set, and no services were to be delivered. Instead, the focus was to be on enabling women to identify their own learning priorities. Its principal strategy is to organize women into *sanghas*, which become the forums for reflection and mutual solidarity, and a means for women to articulate their needs in a range of interconnected ways.

The focus on collectives was itself a conscious decision and a departure from the usual emphasis on individual beneficiaries.

Collective power helps women to overcome disadvantages that extend beyond material things to perceptions of their own abilities and capabilities. The lessons from the women's movement here, in highlighting the need for group solidarity, were strong. Today, of course, the significance of groups and collectives has been recognized as an effective strategy for reaching varied social and community groups and hence forms the basis of most development initiatives.

As the programme does not specify any one agenda, its personnel are continually challenged to translate objectives into workable strategies. This requires responding flexibly and sensitively to the needs and demands of the *sanghas*. A major task has been to remain focused on the continuing learning process. Furthermore, as empowerment is not something to be given out, but to be experienced personally before it can be facilitated in others, the programme provides opportunities for individual decision-making, innovation and creativity.

Social change may be slow, but it cannot be achieved without directly

engaging women and young girls in its process. These cases presented above focuses on women as active agents for securing transformation. Education is an important instrument to support that process. Building and liberating women's critical capacities is important if they are to be partners in change as well as major beneficiaries of it.

Is equality in education affordable?

Individuals cannot develop their full potential without education, nor can they participate fully as citizens. Excluding girls from school badly affects them and even constrains civic and political life. A very important consequence of society investing more in the education of girls and women is the changes brought about in household behaviour and practice. For example, the improved sustenance of children has been shown to be more strongly associated with increased levels of education of the mother than of the father. This is so with respect to the birth weight of children, child mortality, nutrition, morbidity, school entry at early ages and longevity in school. Equally, the schooling of parents (and in particular of female parents) increases the probability of their children – of both sexes – attending school. Thus, giving priority to educating girls during the move towards EFA is a better way of ensuring its future sustainability over the years when the present school-age generation will themselves have become parents.

Arguments that equality cannot be afforded, or that it would generate pressures that conflict with other, more pressing, development priorities are largely false. On the contrary, a committed shift towards the creation of gender equality in education can deliver a wide range of associated benefits for economic growth and for other objectives of development policy.

Even where economic growth remains modest. Political agendas and ideology can also play decisive roles. The provision of education for women has always been highly political, given the history of gender discrimination that has marked most societies. In many, the drive to educate women has had to be framed within wider ideological constructions of the appropriate role for women. A historical perspective, however, shows how such forces can change over time.

Access to education can, in many conservative societies, represent an opportunity for women to move out of the household compound, allowing interaction with others outside the family circle, which in turn broadens

experience and provides access to new resources and skills. NGOs have acted as a laboratory for social change, providing alternative resources to women in the form of micro-finance and training in non-traditional economic activities, built around the right to development, including literacy; have also contributed to mobilizing demand for education.

Box 3: Success story of India: 'The Kerala model'

In the Indian state of Kerala, however, the impact of a matrilineal culture and the efforts of the early modernizing state complemented each other, resulting in unprecedented educational and social development during the early twentieth century. By the 1980s, when state governments elsewhere in India were striving to increase schooling enrolments, Kerala governments were seeking to close schools because of the declining primary school-age population. These different contextual circumstances demonstrate the potential power of public policy to transform women's education.

A major lesson from the Kerala experience, notable in India for having closed the gender gap in primary education by 2001, is the important role played by the state, and by enlightened leadership. As early as 1881, the Maharaja of Travancore had declared: 'No civilized government can be oblivious to the great advantages of popular education, for a government which has to deal with an educated population is by far stronger than one which has to control ignorant and disorderly masses. Hence education is a twice blessed thing – it benefits those who give it and those who receive it.' From an early stage the royal states of Travancore and Cochin – both part of modern-day Kerala –viewed education as an important factor in modernization and development. The spread of education and the egalitarian ethic were mutually supportive forces. The state, for its part, invested in village libraries and night schools in order to sustain literacy and learning. The role of Christian missionaries, who set up schools in which deprived groups were given educational opportunities, was also important.

The expansion of employment opportunities in the public sector, with no institutional or social barriers to female participation, meant that education provided women with an important means of participating in the public arena. In this traditionally matrilineal society, women in Kerala did not face the social barriers that typified many other Indian states. Although by the 1950s the matrilineal family system

had disappeared in Kerala, women retained good access to public employment and political representation. Levels of female literacy remain high.

Kerala State, in the south-west of India, is one of the most developed parts of India. Its average literacy rate of 90.9% contrasts with the national average of 65.4%. Basic education is almost universal. In 2002/03, 5,335,600 children were enrolled in school, of whom 49.2% were girls.

When launching the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized the importance of girls' education as a *tool for* preventing conflict and building peace (UNESCO, 2000*b*).

Resources and aid

National investment in education

Improving access to and the quality of basic education depends partly on increasing public expenditure. Overall, the share of education expenditure in GNP (Gross national product) was above 3% in year 2004. Between 1999 and 2004, the share fell in India. National public spending on ECCE is very low. The share of pre-primary education in total public expenditure on education in 2004 was less than 5%.

International investment in education

Fast-Track Initiative. Designed primarily by the World Bank, the FTI was launched in April 2002 as a process that would provide quick and incremental, technical and financial support to countries that have policies but are not on track to attain Universal Primary Education by 2015. The FTI has raised high expectations that significant new funding would be mobilized for achieving this goal, but has yet to receive substantial and specific international support for its activities.

To overcome the difficulty, India was invited to participate in the Analytical Fast-Track Initiative, which aims to provide them with technical support for the

mainstream Fast-Track Initiative (FTI). Educational sector plans were evaluated using criteria from the Indicative Framework, developed by the World Bank and derived from the Bank's analysis of a group of developing countries that have either attained UPE or made considerable progress towards this goal.

Future Prospects and Redefining the Concept of UEE

The analysis presented above reveals that at all levels of school education, a significant progress in enrolment is made on all aspects of UEE but a large number of children still remain out-of-school. Do the quantitative expansion of educational facilities imply that target of universal enrolment will be achieved in the near future. The estimates of enrolments and attendance give reasonably sound reasons to believe that stipulated targets may not be achieved in the near future. The goal is likely to be achieved by 2004-05 in case of boys and 2007-08 in case of girls. The projected enrolment further reveal that all boys of age group 11-14 years are likely to be enrolled by 2007-08 but Universalization of girls' education would continue to remain far out of the sight. However, a few states may achieve goal earlier than projected at the all-India level.

Major achievement in the quest for UEE

At the end it is worth mentioning some of the major achievements in the quest for universalization of elementary education.

- Reduction in the umber of out of school children: From about 320lakh in 2002-03, the number of out of school children had reduced to 70.5 lakh based on reports of States and Union Territories in March 2006.
- Decline in gender and social gaps: The gender gap at the primary stage reduced from 5.5 percentage points in 2002-03 to 4.2 percentage points in 2005-06. At the upper primary stage this gap reduced from 10.7 percentage points to 8.8 percentage points. The GPI at the primary stage in 2005 was 0.95 and 0.88 for the upper primary stage.
- Reduction in dropout rates: The gross dropout rate, reflected in the Selected Education Statistics of MHRD declined from 39.03% in 2001-02 to 28.49% in 2004-05. For girls, the decline in dropout rate has been significant. During this period it decline from 39.88% to 24.82% - a decline of more than 15 percentage points.

- Enrolment ratios: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), calculated as aratio of the gross enrolment of children as aproportion of the total children in the relevant age group, is an indicator to assess the extent of access of children. Over the year, it showed an increase. At primary stage, starting with 94.9 in 1999-2000, it improved to 108.56% in 2004-05. for upper primary, the same was 58.8% and 70.5%, respectively.

Girls' enrolment: One of the very important attributes to achieve UEE is to ensure gender parity. To measure this, girls' enrolment as a proportion of the total enrolment has been calculated since 1999-2000; 47% of the students enrolled in primary classes in 2004-05 were girls compared to only 43.6% in 1999-2000. For upper primary, 44% children enrolled in 2004-05 were girls compared to 40.4% in the base year (1999- 2000).

Gender parity in the GER, both at primary as well as upper primary stages, was an issue. The gap in GER between boys and girls in primary level was 19 percent points in 1999-2000. This reduced to 5.8 percent points in 2004-05. With respect to upper primary level, it improved from 17.5 percent points to 9 percent points during the same period.

The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER), calculated as a ratio of the net enrolment of children of the right age group as a proportion of the total children in the relevant age group, is an indicator to assess the extent of access of children of the target age group. Under ideal circumstances, the GER and NER should be the same – a phenomenon that can be achieved only when all children of the right age group take admission in schools in grade I, there are no repeaters and no case of dropouts; thereby, no child enrolled in any grade would be under-aged or over-aged.

Table 6: Gross Enrolment Ratios at Primary and Upper Primary Levels

Year	*Primary (grade I-V)*			*Upper-Primary (grade V-VIII)*			*Elementary (grades I-VIII)*		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Total**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
1999-2000	104.1	85.2	94.9	67.2	49.7	58.8	90.1	72.0	81.3
2000-2001	107.3	85.8	96.8	76.2	53.3	65.3	97.3	75.5	86.8
2001-2002	103.1	82.3	93.0	80.3	57.7	69.6	95.7	74.6	85.6
2002-2003	101.4	89.4	95.6	63.2	48.6	56.3	87.1	74.4	81.1
2003-2004	100.8	95.7	98.3	66.9	57.7	62.5	88.0	81.5	84.9
2004-2005	111.4	105.5	108.6	74.8	65.8	70.5	97.6	90.6	94.2

Source : SES, MHRD

A study of the under/over-aged children based on the DISE data of 2003-04 and 2004-05 suggests, in 2003-04, 16% of primary children in the primary classes were in this category; the share of children in the upper primary stage was 23% . This improved in 2004-05 to 14% and 20% respectively in 2004-05.

Table 7: Under/Over-aged children in 2003-04 and 2004-05

Level	**Under-aged**		**Over-aged**		**Total grossness**	
	2003-04	*2004-05*	*2003-04*	*2004-05*	*2003-04*	*2004-05*
Primary	9.48	8.46	6.33	5.8	15.82	14.26
Upper Primary	12.18	11.11	10.80	8.65	22.98	19.76

Source: Elementary Education in India, NIEPA, 2004-05

Table8: Drop-out Rates at Primary and Upper Primary Levels

	Primary-Class I-V					
Stages	**1999-2000**	**2000-01**	**2001-02**	**2002-03**	**2003-04**	**2004-05**
Boys	38.7	39.7	38.4	35.9	33.7	31.37
Girls	42.3	41.9	39.9	33.7	28.6	24.82
total	40.3	40.7	39.0	34.9	31.5	28.49

Source : SES, MHRD

Table 9: Drop-out Rates at Elementary level

	Elementary level-Class I-VIII					
Stages	**1999-2000**	**2000-01**	**2001-02**	**2002-03**	**2003-04**	**2004-05**
Boys	52.0	50.3	52.9	52.3	51.8	50.10
Girls	58.0	57.7	56.9	53.4	52.9	50.76
total	54.5	53.7	54.6	52.8	52.3	50.39

Source : SES, MHRD

Table 10: Proportion of female teachers

	% female teachers						
Stages	**1999-2000**	**2000-01**	**2001-02**	**2002-03**	**2003-04**	**2004-05**	
Primary	35.6%	35.6%	37.1%	39.0%	39.9%	39.6%	
Upper-primary	36.1%	38.7%	37.3%	40.8%	40.8%	36.2%	

Source : SES, MHRD

Gender Gap

The gender gap in enrolment in percentage points during this period was as follows:

Table 11: Gender Gap In Enrolment

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06

Primary	5.5	5.1	5.1	4.2
Upper primary	10.7	9.4	8.9	8.8
elementary	6.8	6.2	6.1	5.4

Source: DISE

Status in secondary and above levels:

With promotion of the Universalization of basic education – which combines primary with lower secondary – pressures to expand participation in secondary education are mounting. In 2004, there was a 20% increase in enrolled in secondary schools over 1999. In spite of the expansion, the participation rate at this level remains relatively low, with an overall GER (Gross enrolment ratio) was around 51% in 2004. The level of participation in lower secondary is much higher than in upper secondary, with rates of 64% and 40%, respectively. Demand for secondary education has increased as more pupils graduate from primary school. Girls' participation grew over the period.

Drop-out from **secondary schooling**: In general, the main reasons cited for boys dropping out from school, in both urban and rural areas, are economic factors –either connected with the need to look for a job, or to the difficulty of meeting school costs. For girls 'family reasons- pregnancy or motherhood' was given as the main factor determining their dropping out of school. Girls drop out because of the lack of schools in rural areas more often by girls than by boys, indicating that the journey time to school is a more significant concern for parents in the case of their daughters than of their sons.

Tertiary education: still a luxury

Enrolment in tertiary education also increased substantially, though this level is still open to few students. Although enrolment in tertiary education increased across by around 63% between 1999 and 2004, only a small share of the relevant age-group has access to this level of education, with a GER of less than 11% in 2004. Gender disparities were generally sharp with few women students in India (0.66). What women choose to study is a key issue.

Female participation in vocational and technical training is lowest. Women are at parity with men in terms of participation in post-secondary education. The gender pattern in the choice of fields of study in tertiary education is a key issue

in debates about gender equality.

Table 12: Percentage of female students in various fields of study

		Fields of study (Percentage female)				
Year	Total all fields	***Education***	***Social sciences, Humanities, Services***	***Natural sciences and engineering***	***Agriculture***	***Health***
1982	29	53	31	16	14	36
2000	43	61	49	23	35	61

Female presence is at its weakest in engineering, manufacturing and construction courses as also in science and agriculture. Women have however continued to progress in their traditional fields, such as social sciences, humanities, services and health related programmes.

With these wide differences, it is very important to keep focus on the goal and it essential to canalize all our resources to achieve the goal of "education for all" by year 2015.

This goal is not only essential for the children who never gone to school but this also effect nation at large and it's growth in other field. This reason makes it much more crucial to achieve the goal of "education for all".

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