

**EDUCATION FOR ALL – MID DECADE ASSESSMENT**

**EDUCATION OF YOUTH AND  
ADOLESCENTS IN INDIA**

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**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION  
NEW DELHI**

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Published by National University of Educational Planning and Administration  
(NUEPA)  
(Declared by the Government of India Under Section No. 3 of the UGC Act 1956)  
17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110 016

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## Preface

The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal approved a comprehensive vision of Education for All (EFA) to be achieved by 2015 based on the six goals. The six goals relate to the areas of early childhood care and education, universalising primary education, gender, youth and adolescents, adult education and quality of education. The main focus is on 'reaching the unreached' for ensuring complete coverage of education. With this background the *Mid- Decade Assessment of Education for All* was initiated to take stock of the progress made with respect to EFA Goals. Corresponding to this exercise, a comprehensive review of the progress made with respect to Education for All in India was conducted jointly by Government of India and the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA).

The present work which is a sequel to the National Report consists of a series of thematic and state review papers. There are nine thematic review papers covering all the six goals including three additional papers on three other themes, namely, Teacher and Teacher Education, Management Strategies for EFA and Financing of EFA in India. These thematic review papers are further followed by a series of analytical papers covering progress of EFA in twenty seven states of India. State reviews attempt to present a quick picture of the current level of progress in each state of India assessing the magnitude of the task involved in achieving EFA goals and projecting a realistic time frame as well as strategies needed to reach the goals. Each thematic review as well as state-specific analytical review paper has been prepared by an established expert in the respective area/state in close collaboration with national and state governments.

The review papers along with the National Report present a comprehensive and disaggregated picture of the progress made towards EFA goals in the country. The papers are coming out at a very opportune time when the Parliament is engaged in debating the legislation to make education for all children a Fundamental Right. While the thematic papers highlight state of development of education with respect to different goals of EFA, the State papers present the diversity of the situation across the country. The whole series would serve as an invaluable independent documentation on various aspects of EFA ranging from early childhood care and education to universal elementary education and adult literacy programmes using authentic data sources accompanied by a review of relevant empirical research.

The whole Project involving the National Report along with the series of thematic and state analytical review papers were conceived and executed by

Prof. R. Govinda, NUEPA who led the entire exercise and would like to thank him profusely for his leadership. Dr. Mona Sedwal who as a part of the Project Team at NUEPA contributed immensely to the whole exercise also deserves appreciation. The Team immensely benefited by the advice given by the Technical Advisory Group set up under the Chairmanship of Professor A.K. Sharma for guiding the entire exercise. I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Prof. A. K. Sharma for his invaluable guidance. Finally, I would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support provided by UNICEF and UNESCO.

**Ved Prakash**  
***Vice Chancellor***  
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## Editorial Note

Indian Constitution directs the State to provide free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14. This goal has been pursued by the country for nearly six decades through successive development plans. The last two decades have witnessed significant improvements in children's participation in schooling, accompanied by substantial increase in investments. The recent effort to raise resources for the sector through imposition of an education cess is major effort in that direction. Even though school education has traditionally remained a subject for action by State Governments, Government of India has, during the last two decades following the National Policy on Education – 1986, begun to play a leading role. This culminated in the launching of the national programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2001. Despite all these efforts, the final goal of providing quality education for all has eluded the country.

Urgency of reaching the goal has been heightened in recent years due to several national and international developments, including commitments made under the Dakar Framework for Action for providing quality Education for All by 2015, which not only covers primary education but also focus on literacy goals, gender equality and quality concerns. The Dakar Framework of Action listed the following six specific goals to be achieved by all countries.

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. 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.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. 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.
6. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The National Plan of Action for Education for All (2002) in India reflects this sense of urgency felt within the country by proposing to reach the targets much ahead of the international dateline. At the national level, the Constitutional Amendment in 2002 declaring education in the age group 6-14 which corresponds to the elementary education stage of schooling a fundamental right has brought the issue of universal elementary education (UEE) to the centre stage of public discourse. The country is in the process of drawing up the legislation for effective implementation of the right for

translating the constitutional provision into reality. With the progress made in recent years the goal seems to be achievable by the international time frame of 2015. But this requires systematic assessment of the various goals the present exercise is one such effort.

UNESCO has been bringing out annual review of the progress made in moving towards the goal of EFA through the Global Monitoring Report. These assessments do not reflect an encouraging picture of the Indian scene. This is an issue of serious concern for the national leadership as one sixth of the world population lives in India. With around 65% adult literacy rate, there are more around 350 million adult illiterates in the country. This should not be taken to imply that no efforts are being made to meet the challenge of EFA. Besides, the national averages do not fully reflect the diverse reality characterizing educational progress in India. In fact, it is paradoxical that while certain pockets of the country are emerging as the international hub for creating a knowledge society, certain other regions and sections of the population continue to be deprived of even basic education. It is clear that in pursuing EFA goals, not all states and regions of the country are in the same league. The variety is too wide to draw any generalization. While some states have made remarkable progress in education, practically eradicating illiteracy and achieving near universal participation of children in elementary education, several other states continue to remain far from the final goal. What is needed to progress faster in moving towards the 2015 EFA deadline in all parts of the country? This obviously demands an analytical exercise - goalwise as well as statewise.

It is with this objective in view that the present exercise was taken up to make an independent assessment of the progress achieved in different states and with respect to different EFA goals. The present series of papers constitute the outcome of such a comprehensive exercise carried out by independent experts, in collaboration with Central and State Governments. The main purpose of the exercise is to place before policy makers, planners and the civil society as a whole an analytical picture of the progress made towards EFA goals and the challenges ahead for reaching the goals in a realistic fashion.

The exercise consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of presenting an overview of progress in the country with respect to six goals highlighted in the Dakar Declaration. This was largely based on the technical guidelines for assessment prepared by UNESCO. A national report entitled "Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment: Reaching the Unreached" has been prepared and published jointly by NUEPA and Government of India.

The Second Part consists of a series of nine thematic review papers dealing with different dimensions of 'Education for All' keeping in view the Indian context and priorities. These include: (i) Early Childhood Care and Education; (ii) Universal Elementary Education; (iii) Adult Education; (iv) Towards Gender Equality in Education; (v) Education of Adolescents and Young Adults; (vi) Quality of Education; (vii) teacher and teacher education; (viii) Management Strategies for EFA and (ix) Financing of EFA. Each of these papers has been prepared by an expert or experts

in the respective area. The papers were reviewed by another independent expert and revised based on the observations.

The third part consists of analytical papers covering all states of India. Each thematic review as well as state-specific analytical review was prepared by an established expert in the respective area/state in close collaboration with national and state governments. The state level reviews are prepared on lines similar to what was followed for preparing the national review. Each of them deals with comprehensively on all six goals of EFA specified in the Dakar Declaration.

While, enrollment rates in elementary schools have gone up significantly during the last decade, one does not observe similar improvement in completion rates. Consequently, a large section of young persons continue to remain without completing the full cycle of basic education. This is a vexing problem that cannot be solved in the short term. It is keeping this in view that the Tenth Five Year Plan emphatically refers to meeting the educational needs of adolescents, particularly girls and young women. The Dakar Framework for Action calls for “ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.” With this in background, the present review paper by Anil Bordia has examined the various steps taken in recent years to meet the learning and life-skill needs of adolescents and young adults in India.

This elaborate exercise of assessing the progress in EFA should be viewed in the context of repeated assertions by the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report on EFA that Indian is at the risk of not making the global targets with respect to several EFA goals. The findings of the review clearly points out that the situation across the country is very diverse. While some States have registered fast progress on all fronts, some others continue to lag behind. Also in general, access to schooling has improved every where even though much remains to be done with respect to other goals of EFA. It is hoped that the various volumes brought out through the exercise would together present a realistic analysis and a disaggregated picture of the Education for All process and achievements in the country.

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## **Acknowledgements**

This comprehensive exercise of reviewing the progress of EFA has been done through active involvement and support of a large team of experts and officials from Government of India as well as various State Governments. The exercise was carried out under the constant guidance of the members of the Technical Advisory Group under the leadership of Professor A. K. Sharma. The task could not have been completed without the commitment and support of Professor Ved Prakash, Vice Chancellor, NUEPA. Special thanks are due to Smt. Anita Kaul, Joint Secretary, MHRD, Government of India who played a central role in conceiving and implementing the whole exercise. Financial support for the exercise came from UNICEF and UNESCO; in particular, thanks are due to Mr. Samphe Lhalungpa who took personal interest in ensuring that the Project is completed smoothly. We would like to record our appreciation for the technical support and cooperation given by the NUEPA Publication Unit and for printing and publishing the volumes.

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## **About the Author**

Mr. Anil Bordia is currently implementing a unique innovative project called Doosra Dashak – a programme for education and development of persons in the 11-20 age group. Earlier Mr. Bordia played a critical role in preparing and implementing the National policy on Education 1986 as Secretary to Government of India. During his tenure as Education Secretary, he was responsible for pioneering projects concerning the universalization of primary education. After his retirement from Indian Administrative Service in 1992, he designed and implemented the well-known programme of Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan. For excellence in the sphere of Education, he was elected Fellow of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID), Bangkok in 1996 and in 1999 UNESCO awarded to him the prestigious Avicenna Gold Medal for Exceptional Contribution to Educational Development.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The education of young people and adolescents has been an issue of major concern in all parts of the world. The issue was highlighted by the International Conference on Education for All (UNESCO 1990) held in Jomtien in 1990. The Dakar Conference on EFA held 10 years later in 2000 again deliberated on the problem and set it out as a separate goal to be pursued under the EFA framework: "Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes". (Goal 3) (UNESCO, 2000) Elaborating this goal the Expanded Commentary to the Dakar Framework for Action states: "All young people should be given the opportunity for ongoing education. For those who drop out of school or complete school without acquiring the literacy, numeracy and life skills they need, there must be a range of options for continuing their learning. Such opportunities should be both meaningful and relevant to their environment and needs to help them become active agents in shaping their future and develop useful work related

skills". (UNESCO, 2000) Assessment of the progress made with respect to the goal finds a place in successive Global Monitoring Reports of the EFA. But the observations are too broad and not adequately focused. The Global Monitoring Report 2007 examined this issue and concluded that monitoring this particular EFA Goal was a major challenge as:

- (a) The goal does not specify any quantitative target to be achieved.
- (b) Absence of a common understanding of which learning objectives and activities to be considered as constituting progress.
- (c) Non-availability of a comparable set of international indicators to signify the extent to which young people's and adults' learning needs are being met. (UNESCO, 2006)

In reality, practically no steps have been taken to give effect to Goal 3 or to monitor it, with the exception of 30

country profiles prepared by the experts in non-formal education. By reviewing these profiles one observes that the work done in this area is rather sporadic and limited in scope. The fact of the matter is that the manner in which the EFA policies and programmes have been formulated make them largely confined to provision of quality primary education.<sup>i</sup>

For determining quantitative target, it was necessary at the outset (i.e., soon after the 2000 Conference) to properly specify the nature of the persons being referred to under the goal. For example, in the context of the South Asian countries in general, and in the context of India in particular, we could consider the two age groups of 10-19 and 20-25, i.e., adolescents and youth, respectively. Another category of persons, who fall in this range, but generally go unnoticed in the EFA provisions, is persons who did not attend school or dropped out before completing primary education. Such specification of the target group is particularly relevant for South Asian countries. Several factors support such a classification of the target population: (a) adolescence is well-understood as a distinct category and there is unanimity among UN agencies about the age of adolescence (10-19) and its characteristics; (b) generally, it is

difficult for persons who have crossed 10 years of age and are still illiterate to get enrolled in primary school; (c) the number of such persons is very large – in India, for example, adolescent persons (11-19 age group) comprise 22 percent of the country's population, one-third of whom are deprived of basic education; and (d) this is a crucial age group which could have great influence on the future of these countries.

As regards youth – persons in the age group of 15-35 can be considered as belonging to this group. However, it can be argued that persons in the 20-25 age group deserve special attention because this is, generally, the age when young people get married, begin to exercise their rights as citizens and enter the world of work. Lack of vocational and life-skills among these young people come in the way of their finding worthwhile employment and adjusting to the emerging world of hope and frustrations. An almost total absence of educational and skills development opportunities is also a characteristic of this age group in South Asian countries.

Once the target group and its characteristics are spelt out, it is possible to indicate the learning activities which are appropriate for the group. Since creation of formal

education structures for this group (11 to 19 and 20 to 25) would be too large a task (particularly keeping in view the short time available before 2015) emphasis will have to be on non-formal and distance education programmes. Although, the authors of the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2007 have suggested the need for international indicators, it should be possible to develop indicators for regions, sub-regions and countries.

It is because of the persisting confusion in interpreting and monitoring Goal 3 that we have this review paper on meeting the educational needs of adolescents, with particular emphasis on those who have been deprived of basic education. The purpose of the paper is not to present a comprehensive overview of all activities undertaken for the group in India. Rather, the attempt is to present a policy overview and highlight the intricacies involved in addressing the educational needs of the group through illustrative initiatives by the Government and non-Government agencies.

#### Indian Context <sup>ii</sup>

Till the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in adolescents had been confined to their contribution to the increase in, or control of, population. They were treated

mainly as a problem referred to in the context of juvenile delinquency or addiction to drugs and alcohol. This perspective changed dramatically when in the context of preparation of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), the Planning Commission set up a Working Group on Adolescents that made recommendations of far reaching importance.

The Report of the Working Group, submitted in June 2001 (GoI, 2001b), was considered and endorsed by the Planning Commission. Some of the observations/recommendations relating to education were as follows:

- (1) Adolescence is a special period of human development, not just physically but also emotionally and cognitively. Adolescent persons are endowed with special ways of thinking and educational inputs should be designed for their development. Their ability to improvise and innovate is often not appreciated, and they are not given a chance to harness these qualities for the purpose of learning and growth. Indeed, youthful idealism and energy resource of adolescents can be a tremendous force for change and reconstruction, with which they can help transform their own condition

- and the conditions of millions of others.
- (2) Throughout the country there is an upsurge in favour of schooling. Parents are now struggling to send their children to school despite tremendous odds. However, their hope of quality education is frustrated, and the 'discouragement effect' gradually sets in. There is little in school curriculum that deals with the life-skills for adolescents that can help to empower them, and there are hardly any links with the world of work. Moreover, what is taught at present hardly ever gets 'understood' or accepted within learners' cognitive framework, and remains at the periphery of their cognitive universe, as redundant and disposable baggage.
- (3) Curriculum for health education should be an important part of all adolescents' learning. It should sensitively relate with an appreciation of a persons' body and its reproductive functions, to enable them to take better care of personal needs.
- (4) The educational needs of adolescents who are out of school must be separately addressed.
- The existing pattern of middle and high school education will not do. Education for them must be linked with empowerment (including enhancing their self-esteem and self-confidence), with survival and with health and sexuality, with awareness about their rights and social, political and community issues, and with mobilization for community action. In short, what we need is a real life education that equips young people to face emerging challenges with confidence.
- (5) Educational interventions for out of school adolescent girls must be sensitive to their special needs, to deal with their problems, desires, insecurities and doubts in a friendly environment. The authoritarian, highly judgmental and even discriminative environment of the formal school and the inhibiting and restrictive atmosphere at home usually result in marginalization of adolescent girls. They need to discover their creative potential through song, dance, theatre and craft, as well as through unconventional games, cycling, karate, etc., that provide a liberating sense of joy they may never have experienced before. The challenge is to design such an



interesting and meaningful curriculum that can compensate for the early years of social and educational neglect and also provide enough motivation for girls to continue with enhanced zeal and confidence. Special strategies for learning in camp situations need to be devised, especially for girls, so that these young women are able to overcome the long neglect they have suffered with regard to their fundamental right to education.

- (6) Continuing education under the National Literacy Mission can provide a platform for youth leadership to facilitate a large spectrum of creative learning activities for adolescents. Such CECs can also form the nodal point for adolescents' Community Action Projects.

### ***Defining Adolescents***

The Working Group for the Tenth Five Year Plan also settled the problem of definition of adolescents. Referring to the UN system's recognition of the age of 10-19 as the age of adolescence, the Working Group came to the conclusion that this age group, namely 10 to 19 years, should be the age of adolescence in our country as well. This

was also accepted by the Planning Commission. Since the year 2002 this age range has come to be acknowledged as the age of adolescence in the country.

### ***Nodal Ministry***

While endorsing the recommendations of the Working Group on the Tenth Five Year Plan, the Planning Commission also recommended that the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports be the nodal ministry to deal with the subject of adolescents. This recommendation was accepted by the central government.

### ***Scheme for Support to NGOs for Education and Development of Adolescents***

Following acceptance of the report of the Working Group for the Tenth Five Year Plan, in April 2004, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports developed a Scheme of Financial Assistance for Development and Empowerment of Adolescents. The scheme provides for financial assistance to NGOs as well as educational institutions and organizations set up for youth development. The main components of the scheme fall within the province of education. They include:

- Training in life-skills;
- Counseling and career guidance;

- Grant for organization of residential education for out of school adolescents;
- Research.

The scheme took time to take off but generated enormous enthusiasm among NGOs, with more than 2000 of them seeking support of the Ministry. One of the problems in implementation of this scheme has been the difficulty in discriminating between NGOs with proven track record and those which are set up wherever they find opportunity to get funds for development activities often without clear focus.

#### ***Demographic and Educational Data***

The age related disaggregated data for 2001 published by the Registrar General of Census Operations shows that there were 225.1 million persons in the 10-19 age group (119.6 million males and 105.5 million females) comprising 21.88 percent of the population. Taking into account the Planning Commission's population projections, the population in this age group in 2007 is likely to be 245.0 million (128.5 million males and 116.5 million females) comprising 21.70 percent of the total population. According to 2001 Census, out of the population of 225.1 million adolescents, 43.6 million were illiterates and 47.6

million were literate but not completed primary education, making a total of 91.2 million who had not had primary education (Gol, 2007c).

Estimating the number of persons in the relevant age group, who have not had primary education in 2007, had to factor in the progress made in the education sector along with population projections. Three sets of data could be considered: (a) According to the MHRD, between 2001 and 2005 the GER increased by 2.1 percent at the primary age and 2.20 percent at upper primary stage. (b) Decrease in dropout rate during this period has been 7.56 percent at the primary stage, 1.73 at the upper primary stage and 3.35 at the secondary stage (c) The NSSO surveys show that between 1999-2000 and 2004, there was an increase of 6.3 percent in school enrolment in the 5-9 age group, 7.2 percent in the 10-14 age group and 2.4 percent in the 15-19 age group.

On the basis of the above data it would be correct to assume that there has been an increase of approximately one percent per year in the enrolment in the 10-19 age group during 2001 and 2007. An estimate of the number of adolescent persons who have not completed primary education in 2007 is shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Estimated Population and Educational Status of Adolescents (10-19 age group) in 2001 and 2007**

Year	Population of the Adolescents (10-19 age group) and % of Total Population			No. of Persons not Completed Primary Level and % of Total Adolescent Group		
	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
2001	225.1	119.6	105.5	91.2	43.5	47.7
	21.88%	22.47%	21.25%	40.52%	36.39%	45.21%
2007	245.0	128.5	116.5	82.2	37.7	44.5
	21.7%	22.0%	21.4%	33.52%	29.39%	38.21%

Source: Year 2001 data based on Census 2001 and year 2007 population data based on Planning Commission projections. Other projections made on the basis of progress made in education sector between 2001 and 2007.

If we make an estimation of 'uneducated' persons in the 10-19 age group on the basis of the MHRD (Gol, 2006) and the NUEPA (Mehta, 2007) statistics we would arrive at a similar conclusion. Gross enrolment ratio at the primary stage is reported to be nearly 100 percent and for upper primary stage 62.40 percent. However, if we exclude approximately 25 percent underage and overage, the net enrolment ratio comes down significantly. Although correct dropout rates are not available, NUEPA (DISE) gives some indication in the form of 'apparent survival rate'. This shows that about one-third of the persons enrolled at primary stage dropout; the proportion for upper primary level is a

good deal more. Taken all these statistics into account, it is clear that at least one-third of all persons in the 10-19 age group have not had education up to primary stage. This gives a staggering figure of more than 80 million adolescents who have not had primary education.

Yet another method of estimation of adolescent persons who have not completed primary education in the year 2007 is to rely on the Registrar General of Census Operations for population estimates and on the 61st round of the NSSO for estimation of educational deprivation.

**Table 1.2: Demographic and Educational Estimates (10-19 age group, 2007)**

Description	Estimate	Source
Estimated total population of India.	1112.19 million	Population projection for India and states, 2001-2026, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Government of India.
Estimated total population in the age group of 10-19 years.	241.52 million	-do-
Estimated population of illiterate persons in the age-group of 10-19 years.	30.58 million (12.66% of population in this age group).	61st Round of Survey Report of NSSO.
Estimated population literate and below primary level in the age group of 10-19 years.	50.02 million (20.71% of population in this age group).	-do-
Target population for adolescent education programme.	80.60 million (33.37% of population in this age group)	Estimated population literate and below primary level and illiterate persons in the age group of 10-19 years.

***Working Group on Youth Affairs and Adolescents' Development for Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)***

The Working Group comprehensively reviewed the progress of preceding years keeping in view, among other things, the recommendations of the Working Group on Adolescents for the Tenth Plan. It recommended that the Scheme of Financial Assistance for Development and Empowerment of Adolescents should be continued with

revised pattern for financial support. The Working Group also suggested that a new scheme should be taken up for establishment of Regional Resource Centres for Adolescents' Development. These resource centres are to bring focus on the learning and developmental needs of adolescents and to provide training to people in government and non-government sectors in matters relating to adolescents education and development. The Working Group also

recommended that in order to appropriately articulate the concerns of adolescents as a distinct group and to provide directions for operationalizing the vision for adolescents' development a separate policy for adolescents should be formulated.

The main emphasis of the Working Group was to call upon the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Education) as well as the other ministries to provide enough attention to education and development needs of adolescents. The main recommendations of the Working Group on education (Gol, 2001a) are as follows:

- Education of adolescents has a direct bearing on the development of the country and in addressing social concerns. The nation loses the potential manpower if education of satisfactory quality is not provided to adolescent persons.
- Counseling should help adolescents with special needs and challenges related to this age. Special attention needs to be given to the problem of substance abuse.
- Suitable life-skills education should be available to students as well as out of school adolescent persons. This should also be related to the emerging world of work.

- There is an urgent need to provide to out of school adolescents a second chance to complete their elementary education.
- The learning needs of adolescents from educationally backward areas, SC, ST and minorities need to be given special attention.
- Organization of bridge courses, followed by mainstreaming of adolescents into the school system, deserves to be expanded.
- Adolescence is the phase when issues related to sex and sexuality start playing an important role. Reproductive health and sexuality education need to be made part of all mainstream education for adolescents.
- The overwhelming reality of HIV/AIDS pandemic must be recognized and the education system should find ways for preparing adolescents and youth to face challenges associated with it.

### ***Sub-Group on Adolescent Education***

A sub-group on Adolescent education was also set up in preparation for the Eleventh Five Year Plan under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This is significant as the MHRD, though not directly vested with the responsibility as the nodal ministry,

has several components in the SSA and the NLM which overlap in scope and content addressing the educational needs of the adolescent group. The Sub-group on Adolescent Education reiterated the recommendations of the Working Group on Adolescents set up in the context of the Tenth Plan, particularly insofar as the recommendations of the Working Group related to education. In a statement of considerable significance the report of this sub-group<sup>iii</sup> stated that adolescents' education could be a matter of great importance for the future of the country. The demographic compulsions, the harm being done due to lack of their education and the huge promise inherent in providing relevant education to them, make adolescents' education a most significant challenge of the present time.

Elaborating on this point, the Sub-group stated that the number of persons in 10-19 age group, who have remained deprived of satisfactory quality of primary education, is likely to be about 80 million and the number in the coming years is likely to be of similar order. The Sub-group further argued that the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and the National Literacy Mission, important though these programmes are, will not be able to provide relevant education to out of school adolescent persons. The Sub-group went on to say that keeping in

view the vast numbers of out of school adolescents and the special nature of education that has to be provided for them it would be advisable to view adolescents' education as the third stream of basic education alongside elementary education and literacy.

The other main recommendations of the Sub-group for the Eleventh Plan were as follows:

- (a) *A Rights Based Approach:* Education of satisfactory quality should be viewed as a right akin to Right to Education provided to children up to 14 years of age provided in the constitution of our country.
- (b) *Gender Equity as an Overriding Concern:* The postulates written in the section of Education for Women's Equality in National Policy on Education 1986/92 should be adhered to in the educational programmes for adolescents, particularly for girls.
- (c) *Priority to the Most Disadvantaged:* The *Dalits*, *Adivasis*, persons from minority community and persons with physical and mental disability have traditionally been denied access to good quality education. This imbalance should be corrected at upper primary and secondary

stage in school education as well as while planning programmes for out of school adolescents.

(d) *Adolescents' Involvement as Agents of Social Change*: Building a framework of values in adolescents' education would help in enabling these persons to play a role as activists for social change.

(e) *Adolescents' Education and the World of Work*: For the older age group among adolescents the need for remunerative work is a universally felt phenomenon. In planning for their education we have to give attention to their livelihood needs.

## PROGRAMMES FOR ADOLESCENTS' EDUCATION

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A large number of programmes for adolescents' education have been taken up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and other ministries /departments of Government of India in recent years. An attempt is made in the following pages to present a summary Table giving an overview of programmes /schemes for adolescents' education being run by different Ministries /Departments of Government of India. This is followed by a detailed presentation on the contents and processes concerning four significant programmes which are particularly promising. These are: (a) Mahila Samakhya - the case of Bihar has been selected due to the special attention

being given to adolescents in that state and the empowering processes successfully implemented on a substantial scale; (b) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas - a comparatively new scheme but one that could impact a very large number of adolescent girls; (c) Adolescent Education Programme: Life-skills Education – teams of experts have given considerable attention to enhance the feasibility and relevance of this instructional intervention; and (d) National Institute of Open Schooling – perhaps the world's largest programme of distance education for persons in adolescent age group which has its impact in all parts of the country.



**Table 2.1: Programme of the Central Government for Adolescents' Education**

S. No.	Ministry /Programme /Scheme	Thrust Area and Focus	Implementation Mechanism at Grassroots Level
1	<p><b>Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of School Education &amp; Literacy).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan</li> <li>• Programme of Alternative &amp; Innovative Education</li> <li>• National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level.</li> <li>• Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya <i>(elaborated elsewhere in this paper)</i></li> <li>• Mahila Samakhya <i>(elaborated elsewhere in this paper)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enrolment, retention and provision of quality education to children in 6-14 age group.</li> <li>- Drawing working children and other out of school adolescents into educational mainstream.</li> <li>- Out of school persons, mainly girls in 10-14 age group.</li> <li>- Reaching out to 'hardest to reach' out of school adolescent girls for upper primary education.</li> <li>- Community mobilization</li> <li>- Girls in 11-13 age group belonging to SC, ST and minorities through residential schools.</li> <li>- Education for empowerment of adolescent girls from socially and economically marginalized groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schools, in partnership with village community, PTAs.</li> <li>- School Development and Management Committee.</li> <li>- Panchayati Raj Institutions.</li> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- Residential bridge courses of 7-9 month duration for girls.</li> <li>- Diverse innovative projects taken up by government or non-government agencies.</li> <li>- Cluster level model schools in 3164 educationally backward blocks.</li> <li>- Gender sensitive measures to facilitate participation of adolescent girls.</li> <li>- 1819 Residential Schools functioning.</li> <li>- Village level women's collectives called 'mahila sangha'.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adolescent Education Programme: Life Skills Education <i>(elaborated elsewhere in this paper)</i></li> <li>• National Literacy Mission- basic literacy and Operation Restoration.</li> <li>• Continuing Education Scheme.</li> <li>• Jana Shikshan Sansthan.</li> <li>• National Institute of Open Schooling <i>(elaborated elsewhere in this paper)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life skills education.</li> <li>- Capacity development for leadership.</li> <li>- Creating awareness about adolescents' reproductive and sexual health concerns including HIV and providing information about substance use (drugs and alcohol).</li> <li>- Provision of functional literacy to all persons in 15-35 age group.</li> <li>- Giving fillip to NLM, which shows signs of slackening.</li> <li>- Learning opportunity to non-literates and out of school adolescents.</li> <li>- Equivalency programmes, vocational skills training and courses for quality of life improvement.</li> <li>- Vocational, employment oriented courses for adolescents and young adults mainly from disadvantage families.</li> <li>- Access to education for school dropouts and disadvantaged adolescents through open learning system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 54 Mahila Shikshan Kendras</li> <li>- Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools.</li> <li>- Special learning material, including teachers' guide prepared in collaboration with NACO.</li> <li>- Volunteer teachers</li> <li>- Learning centres at work place.</li> <li>- Continuing Education Centres at the village level in 316 districts.</li> <li>- Rural libraries attached with primary and upper primary schools.</li> <li>- 172 Jana Shikshan Sansthasn in as many districts.</li> <li>- Correspondence education.</li> <li>- Use of educational technology.</li> <li>- Personal contact programmes through study centres.</li> </ul>
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2.	<p><b>Ministry of Labour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Child Labour Projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disengagement from labour of children upto 14 years of age.</li> <li>Non-formal education</li> <li>Skills /vocational training</li> <li>Health-care and nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special schools for working children.</li> <li>Non-formal education centres.</li> <li>Rehabilitation-cum-Welfare Centre</li> <li>NGO involvement.</li> <li>250 districts covered</li> </ul>
3.	<p><b>Ministry of Youth Affairs &amp; Sports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scouting &amp; Guiding</li> <li>Scheme for Development &amp; Empowerment of Adolescents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing opportunity to adolescents and youth for balanced physical and mental development and social service.</li> <li>Funds are provided for a range of activities which meet the learning and development needs of adolescents – scheme developed on the bases of recommendation made by Working Group for 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bharat Scouts &amp; Guides.</li> <li>School system.</li> <li>Camps and jamborees.</li> <li>Rovering activities for out of school youth.</li> <li>Implemented mainly through NGOs.</li> <li>NYKs and NSS also eligible to participate in the scheme.</li> </ul>
4.	<p><b>Ministry of Tribal Affairs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of Ashram Schools in tribal Sub-plan area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boarding hostels for tribal children to enable participation in schools.</li> <li>Residential schools for all-round development of tribal children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hostels</li> <li>Residential Schools</li> <li>Emphasis on co-curricular activities.</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b>Ministry of Women &amp; Child Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kishori Shakti Yojna</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empowerment of adolescent girls to enable them to realize their full potential.</li> <li>Skill development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anganwadi organises special activities for enrolled adolescent girls.</li> </ul>

6.	<b>Ministry of Health &amp; Family Welfare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Rural Health Mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primary health care facilities specially targeted for adolescent persons.</li> <li>- Convergence of health-care with social sector programmes.</li> <li>- Adolescent Reproductive &amp; Sexual health (ARSH)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health Sub-centre and PHC.</li> <li>- ASHA</li> <li>- Village health committees.</li> </ul>
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Source: Annual Reports of the concerned Ministries /Departments of Government of India and reports of the Working Group on Youth Affairs & Adolescents Development and of the Sub-group on Adolescent Education referred to above.

**(a) Mahila Samakhya**

A large section of families in rural India give little importance to girls' education – they believe that girls have to get married soon after attaining puberty and after getting married their lives consist of looking after their families, having and rearing of children (GoI, 2007a). This traditional perception about women's status in family and society was questioned in the National Policy on Education 1986. (GoI, 1986) Viewing education as an instrument for women's equality, the NPE stated:

'Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. This will be an act of faith and social engineering. The removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhabiting their access to, and retention in elementary

education will receive overriding priority'.

Mahila Samakhya (MS) was started in 1989 in pursuance of the NPE 1986. The critical focus in MS is on empowerment of women, it being assumed that once women go through the empowering processes they would wish to become educated and would not only ensure that their daughters receive education they would also become protagonists for the spread of education among girls. MS aims at creating a collective awareness and understanding of women's subordination and to enhance their capacity to challenge this situation.

The underlying principles of MS can be summarized as follows:

- i) All processes and activities within the programme must be based

- on respect for women's existing knowledge, experience and skills.
- ii) Every component and activity within the project must create an environment for learning, help women to experience and affirm their strengths, create time and space for reflection and respect individual uniqueness and variation.
  - iii) Decisions regarding planning and evaluation processes should be taken by women's collectives.
  - iv) All project structures and personnel play facilitative and supportive, rather than directive roles.
  - v) Women and women's groups at the village level set the pace and priorities and have the responsibility for making decisions concerning form and content of all project activities.

The village collective, called Mahila Sangha, is the core activity in MS and all activities are planned around this collective. The Mahila Sangha provides the space where women can meet, be together and initiate the process of reflection, thinking, analyzing and feeling confident to articulate their

needs through a collective process. Funds for various activities, including those relating to education are channalized through Mahila Sangha. Over a period of time, partly due to their own urge and also due to informal message from the administrative authorities Mahila Sanghas have been making substantial educational interventions. These relate to education of children, adolescents and adult women. In addition to education, Mahila Sanghas have been involved in health programmes, campaign against prenatal sex determination, female foeticide, child marriage, etc. In recent years they have also been active in awareness building for HIV/AIDS. Members of the Sanghas have been forming self help groups and have engaged in entrepreneurship training. The scheme of Mahila Samakhya is at present being implemented in 83 districts of nine states in our country.

#### *Mahila Samakhya in Bihar*

MS was launched in Bihar in 1992 as an integral part of the Bihar Education Project which was started in four districts. At that time all the parameters relating to women's status in Bihar were extremely adverse. The state had the lowest female literacy rate, 33.59 percent against the national average of 54.16 percent. The sex ratio in Bihar

was 921 female to 1000 males. Child marriage was rampant and indicators about nutrition, IMR, etc., were alarmingly low. MS now extends to 13 districts covering 3,934 villages with 4,442 active Mahila Sanghas (called Mahila Samooh in Bihar). In 2006, MS Bihar was registered as Bihar Mahila Samakhya Society, a high point in the journey for women's empowerment. Since its inception, MS Bihar has sought to conscientize and enable women to examine the roots of their marginalization and to develop necessary self confidence to overcome this situation. As stated by Sister Sabeena, Director MS Bihar, Mahila Samakhya programme is basically a revolutionary education programme for women. The education process and methodology are based on respect for women's existing knowledge, experience and skills. Mahila Samakhya creates an environment where women demand education for them and ensure that their children – girls and boys – enroll and remain within the school system. (Mahila Samakhya Society, 2007)

#### *Programmes for Adolescent Girls under Mahila Samakhya*

From the beginning MS leadership has recognized the necessity of providing education to adolescent girls and to

gradually train them as social activists. This is exemplified by components relating to education of adolescents.

#### *Jagjagi Centres*

The concept behind the word *Jagjagi* is to awaken the world by awakening women and adolescent girls. These centres are non-residential learning centres for adolescent girls and young women. The main objective of *Jagjagi* centres is to insist on regular participation of adolescent girls and young women to complete their education and to develop a positive self image and to motivate them for education and life skills. The characteristic features of *Jagjagi* Centres are as follows:

1. *Jagjagi* Centres lay emphasis on the liberating potential of education.
2. *Jagjagi* Centres use gender-sensitive, empowerment-oriented teaching-learning materials and methods. These materials provide life-oriented learning that is participatory and experience-based.
3. The instructors are chosen by Mahila Samoohs and are known as sahelis, who are accountable to the Mahila Samoohs.

4. Supervision and monitoring of the *Jagjagi* Centres are done by the Mahila Samooh women.

There are at present 1,526 Jagjagi Centers with an enrolment of 36,419 adolescent girls and 8,181 young women. Over the years, 17,885 adolescent girls have been mainstreamed into the school system.

#### *Kishori Manch*

Kishori Manch is an important wing of the *Jagjagi* Centres. It is a platform for *Jagjagi* women to meet regularly, to share their experiences and to discuss issues affecting their identity and well-being, including issues such as reproductive health, personal hygiene, violence, their rights, etc. It is also a platform for the adolescent girls of the village to express themselves. The groups elect their leaders and they are given special orientation and leadership training. These young girls are helped to reason and question about their status, their existence, their rights, etc. They have emerged as a strong, dynamic force to demand girls' education and to fight against social evils like child marriage, dowry, sexual abuse and general atmosphere of women's subordination. Many of these girls acquire the skill of 'karate'. Karate training instills a lot of self-confidence in girls. There are 1,174 Kishori Manchas

with a combined membership of 30,732 girls.

#### *Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSK)*

These are residential education centres where adolescent girls come to study. It has a special residential curriculum of 6 to 8 months' duration designed to address the needs of those who missed the opportunity to enter the formal education system. In other words, it is a centre for residential education where illiterate and school dropout adolescent girls can complete their primary level education and acquire basic literacy and mathematical skills. The main purpose of the MSK is to develop a pool of trained, highly motivated rural women to assume leadership roles in their communities.

The holistic nature of the MSK courses helps in inculcation of a positive self-image and high degree of confidence. They acquire practical work experience, both during the training period and the follow-up. Participatory and interactive teaching and learning methods are used with specially prepared books and teaching aids. MSKs have also played a significant role in delaying the age of marriage since they encourage girls to take a stand about their own lives.

After passing out from the MSK, adolescent girls are encouraged to

enroll in regular upper primary schools to bring them into education mainstream. A number of MSK girls have attained secondary and senior secondary educational levels. Apart from mainstream education, the girls and women are familiarized with the knowledge of law, rights, health, gender issues, environment, etc. For personality development and self-confidence, they are trained in cycling, judo/ karate, operating a generator, etc. At this time a total of 22 MSKs were operational in Bihar with 720 adolescent girls enrolled. Since start of MS in Bihar 1,419 have been mainstreamed into formal schools.

**(b) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)**

This scheme, which is an integral part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, was started in 2004 to enhance opportunities to girls to access upper primary education. It is implemented only in educationally backward blocks with concentration of ST, SC, OBC and Muslim minority.

The KGBVs specifically target adolescent girls, who either due to lack of accessibility or due to the costs involved, are not able to continue their education beyond the primary stage. The KGBVs are residential schools which begin with the upper primary stage but may eventually provide

residential education of secondary stage also. Generally, these schools begin with 50 students but if more eligible students become available, particularly from SC, ST and Muslim minority background, they are not to be denied admission.

The central government has sanctioned 2,180 KGBVs so far, of which 1,819 are operational. Of the operational KGBVs, one-third is in SC concentration blocks and another one-third in ST concentration blocks. Out of the total number enrolled the percentage of SC and ST students is 27 percent and 32 percent. The KGBVs have not succeeded in attracting appreciable number of Muslim girls, their percentage being less than five.

A number of innovative initiatives have been taken in the KGBVs. For example, all the 19 Vidyalayas in Andhra Pradesh, 82 in Bihar and 57 in Tamil Nadu are being run by NGOs. Many of these NGOs are introducing innovative activities such as story telling and special attention to health, nutrition and sanitation. Special mention should also be made of the fact that 75 of the KGBVs are being run as a part of Mahila Samakhya, as a result of which empowering processes have been incorporated in the curricular/co-curricular programmes. A number of states have introduced the use of



computer for KGBV girls. In Rajasthan, for example, computer-aided learning has been introduced. Specially designed learning materials are being developed in Jharkhand, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. A couple of states have also introduced crafts training in a systematic manner.

This scheme was evaluated in 2007 by an independent group. (UNICEF, 2007) Some of the important conclusions of the evaluation are as follows:

- The scheme has strong political and administrative support at the central as well as state level.
- The parents and rural communities have been very positive about the scheme. People living in remote rural areas find this scheme particularly beneficial for them.
- As envisaged in the planning of this scheme, it reaches out to girls from the most deprived sections in rural areas.
- On the whole, girls studying in the KGBVs were found to be happy with their arrangements and were enthusiastic about pursuing their studies.
- The programme for construction of buildings is proceeding at a slow pace due to which these schools are facing difficulties. Sanitary

conditions, in particular, were found to be deficient.

- There is need to build a good programme of life-skills for KGBV girls. That would not only build self-confidence, it may help in developing leadership qualities.

The KGBV is indeed a very promising scheme. The large number of schools sanctioned and the amount of money invested give one the confidence that the Government will sustain this initiative so as to enable these girls to receive residential education up to the senior secondary stage. The disadvantages suffered owing to their bringing up can be rectified through good quality residential education. More importantly, if well-planned life-skills education can be made a part of this training programme the benefits which are accruing in Mahila Shikshan Kendras under Mahila Samakhya could be extended on a large scale throughout the country. If the existing KGBVs could provide five years of education it would be possible to provide high degree of motivation to half a million girls who could evolve as women activists, who could be harbingers of social change.

**(c) Adolescent Education  
Programme – Life Skills Education**

In the last quarter of the twentieth century there was a feverish concern due to population increase. Population education was introduced in schools as well as literacy programmes. In the nineties of the last century the HIV/AIDS pandemic was already attracting much notice. As a consequence of this situation the following programmes were introduced in the school system all over the country:

- a) National Population Education Project;
- b) The Project on Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH);
- c) The School AIDS Education Programme.

The anomaly of three different programmes, sponsored by different UN agencies but all of them implemented with the help of the NCERT throughout the school system became evident as the last millennium drew to a close. In 2005 Adolescents Education Programme (AEP) was launched by the Ministry of HRD in collaboration with the National AIDS Control Organization, Government of India. (GoI, 2007b) The goal of AEP is to empower adolescent students to protect themselves from HIV

infection and shun drug abuse. It is designed as an early HIV prevention intervention by providing adolescents with information on HIV /AIDS and substance abuse as well as developing in them life skills as the most effective way to stem the spread of the HIV infection as well as substance abuse.

*Feature of AEP*

The AEP covers all secondary and senior secondary schools in rural as well as urban areas. The programme has three major components:

- (i) Process of Growing Up;
- (ii) HIV/AIDS; and
- (iii) Substance (Drug) Abuse.

The process of growing up covers subjects such as growth and development during adolescence, psychological developments including development of sexual characteristics, socio-cultural development including relationships of adolescents with parents, peer groups and the opposite sex and gender roles and myths and misconceptions. The component on HIV/AIDS includes causes and consequences of this disease, preventive measures, anti-retroviral therapy and individual and social responsibilities towards HIV/AIDS patients. Under the component of Substance (Drug) Abuse, the areas

covered include the situations in which adolescents are driven to substance abuse, commonly abused substances, consequences of substance abuse, preventive measures, treatment, rehabilitation of drug addicts and individual and social responsibilities.

The situation and methods used for transaction of this programme include awareness building and integration of these three areas in the school curriculum. This integration is achieved through building into the curriculum issues of reproductive and sexual health relevant to the cultural setting. The responsibility for implementation of this programme at the Centre rests with the NCERT, Central Board of Secondary Education, National Institute of Open Schooling, etc. and at the state level the responsibility is shared by the SCERTs, State Boards of Secondary Education, DIETS, etc.

#### *Review of AEP and the Revised Scheme*

Even before the AEP could be properly implemented there was a furore in some of the legislative bodies as well as the media. Obscurantist elements acknowledged the need for a programme like AEP, but expressed outrage at the use of pictures to acquaint adolescent persons with human body and reproductive

processes. Despite advice to the contrary by the experts from the NCERT and NACO, a decision was made to review the process content and, particularly, the teaching and learning material. An experts committee was set up which has submitted its recommendations. In essence the committee has recommended continuance of the AEP with some modifications in content and teaching /learning material. The report prepared by the experts group highlights the need for addressing the sexual and reproductive health concerns of young people. In collaboration with non-governmental organizations, all governments have been urged to meet the special needs of adolescents and to establish appropriate programmes to respond to those needs. The experts group has also pointed out that increasing investment in improving the lives of adolescents will also have an impact on achieving several of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that include gender equality, primary education, maternal and child health and reversing the trend of HIV epidemic. The experts group has concluded as follows:

‘Provision of accurate and comprehensive sexuality education can contribute to improving the health of young people. Although knowledge and skills gained through

comprehensive sexuality education are not sufficient in themselves to result in good sexual health, they are necessary steps towards this goal'.

In making its recommendations the experts group has reiterated the need to continue AEP for classes IX – XI, i.e., for persons between the age of 14-17 years. It has provided flexibility to the State Education Departments to modify the programme depending on the state specific context. The revised aims of the AEP have been stated as follows:

- Knowing about themselves, their adolescence and their sexuality;
- Learning basic facts on HIV and other sexually transmitted infections;
- Understanding the risks involved in substance abuse;
- Developing and reinforcing life skills that enable them to protect themselves;
- Dispelling myths and clarifying misconceptions;
- Finding ways in which they can help fight the HIV epidemic and encourage positive attitudes towards people living with HIV.

The political leadership of our country and educational planners will have to take a firm stand with regard to AEP. What is at stake is not only sexual and

reproductive health of young people and the compelling need for dissuading them from substance abuse, but also the nation's ability to face and cope with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The pandemic is a glaring reality; we cannot turn our eyes away.

*(d) National Institute of Open Schooling*

There has been a phenomenal expansion of open and distance learning in the second half of the twentieth century. (NCERT and NACO, 2005) While the conventional system of education continues to be the mainstream of educational transaction, it has its own limitations with regard to expansion, access, equity and cost-effectiveness. In India, the explosive increase in the number of pupils at the secondary and tertiary level has made it imperative to establish credible systems of open learning – at the tertiary, secondary as well as basic education levels.

The revolutionary developments that have taken place in the last couple of decades in information and communication technology have facilitated considerable expansion of open and distance learning systems and, at the same time, have made it possible to provide constructivist and learner-friendly programmes.

### *Objectives*

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), which was originally called the National Open School (NOS), was established by the Government of India in 1989. In the following year the NOS was vested with the authority to examine and certify learners registered with it for pre-degree level courses. The name of the NOS was changed to the National Institute of Open Schooling in July 2002. The NOS was established with the objective of providing quality education for a large number of persons who could not secure admission in formal education institutions or who were unable to pursue courses run by those institutions due to their whole time nature. In this sense the NOS aimed at building an inclusive learning society. The NOS was also intended to conduct vocational courses for skill upgradation. The NOS/NIOS was also intended as a National Resource Centre to assist in the expansion of open learning facilities through institutions established by state governments. As regards its clientele the NOS/NIOS was intended, from the beginning, to serve school dropouts, marginalized groups such as rural adolescents, urban poor, girls and housewives, ex-servicemen and differently abled persons.

### *Nature of Courses and Methods*

The NIOS conducts two categories of courses: academic and vocational. (NIOS, 2007a). There are three categories of academic courses. Firstly, open basic education programme (OBE) which is run in partnership with 280 accredited agencies. The work of the NIOS consists of development of curriculum and support to these agencies. Examinations are conducted corresponding to grade III, V and VIII. During 2006-2007, the OBE enrolment was 34,504. The other two categories of academic courses are secondary and senior secondary certificate courses. The NIOS follows the cafeteria approach in offering these courses. Learners have been provided considerable flexibility in selection of subjects with language as the only compulsory subject. The NIOS offers 27 subjects at secondary/senior secondary stage. Enrolment in secondary and senior secondary courses is 1,58,364 and 1,28,636 respectively.

A fairly large range of Vocational Education Courses is offered. Many of these courses are related to job requirement in various government programmes as well as needs of the private sector, such as early childhood care, teacher training certificate, public health worker certificate, electrical

technicians, beauty culture, etc. At this time (March 2008) the NIOS is working towards strengthening the curriculum framework for open vocational education. Enrolment in vocational courses in the year 2006-2007 was 22,166.

An important characteristic of the NIOS programme is that it is accompanied by audio and video programmes. These cassettes are sent to accredited institutions for academic and vocational courses as well as to the regional centres of the NIOS. In the last few years the NIOS has produced 306 audio and 270 video programmes in different subjects. Most of these programmes have been provided both in English and Hindi versions by using formats such as documentary, docudrama, etc. During 2006-2007, nine multi-media programmes were produced in Chemistry and uploaded on the Sakshat, the educational portal of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The NIOS has been provided regular time-slot on the Gyan Darshan of Edusat and DD-1 Channel. The video programmes prepared in NIOS are telecast through these modes. The NIOS avails of all possibilities to build flexibility in its activities, some examples of which are as follows:

- (a) There is no upper age limit, nor is there a lower age limit for admission to Open Basic Education courses.
- (b) Learners have a vast choice from which to choose subjects and the medium of instruction. Mediums available are Hindi, English, Urdu, Telugu, Marathi, Malayalam and Gujarati.
- (c) A person once enrolled can complete his/her course within a period of five years. If the learner is not able to complete the course in five years he/she can accumulate credits and complete the course subsequently.
- (d) In addition to self instructional material, students have the benefit of personal contact programme. All the accredited institutions are required to provide this facility.

#### *Enrolment*

Outside the system of formal education the NIOS offers the largest education programme for adolescent persons as evident from Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Age-wise Distribution of Student Enrolment in NIOS during 2006-2007**

Age	Number of Students	Percentage
10 to 14	10,873	3.73%
15 to 20	2,15,233	73.96%
21 to 25	43,022	14.79%
Above 25	21,855	7.51%
Total	2,90,983	100%

Gender-wise enrolment at secondary level is given in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3: Gender wise Enrolment during 2006-2007**

	Secondary	Senior Secondary	Total	Percentage
Boys	108566	91222	199788	68.66%
Girls	52225	38970	91195	31.34%
Total	160791	130192	290983	100%

The total enrolment in 2006-2007 in academic courses was 2,90,983 and in vocational courses 22,166. This makes the NIOS the largest open schooling system in the world, particularly one that primarily serves adolescent persons.

#### *Extension*

With its limited infrastructure the NIOS cannot provide opportunity to meet the learning needs of adolescent persons in the country. Need has been felt for the last seven years to create a network of organizations for open schooling at the state level also. With a view to translating this resolve into practice, the NIOS has been pursuing with state governments to set up state open

schools. 10 states have already set up such schools and eight more are in the process of doing so. To facilitate cooperation and interaction between the NIOS and state open schools a National Consortium for Open Schooling has been established with the NIOS as its secretariat. The NCOS meets once every year and works for promotion of open schooling. The Central Government having decided to move towards universalization of secondary education and also having decided that open school network should be able to cater to at least 15 percent students at secondary level, the NIOS has accelerated the pace of its effort to help state open schools in enlarging their activities and maintaining quality.

### ***An Overview of Programmes***

As one reviews the large number of programmes for education of adolescent persons, one comes to the conclusion that most of the programmes for adolescents are of formal education. These include the school system (primary and secondary level); scholarships programme, mainly for the SC, ST, OBC and girls; hostels and residential schools and institutions of vocational/technical education. On the whole, there is little awareness in the formal education system – including those who prepare curriculum, have responsibility for teacher education or those responsible for educational planning and management – about the distinct learning and developmental needs of adolescent persons. Consequently, the formal system which provides education to adolescent persons treats them like children – providing little vent to their energy or creativity and leaving them to somehow cope with their psychological and physical problems (NIOS, 2007b).

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mahila Samakhya have caught the imagination of cross-sections of people of India. The SSA's great strength is that it has been provided substantial financial resources and there is an inbuilt scope in it for programmes that are innovative and geared to providing access to primary

education for all children. However, many of the state governments, particularly of the Hindi speaking belt, are not keeping pace with the spirit and energy imparted to the SSA by the Central Government. Besides, the SSA's preoccupation to somehow show all children enrolled comes in the way of quality improvement and relating education with adolescents' learning needs. On the other hand, Mahila Samakhya continues to exemplify what can be achieved if flexibility and gender sensitivity are built into educational programmes.

As regards the Adolescents Education Programme, being implemented at the secondary level in cooperation with the NACO, there can be little doubt about the need for life-skills education, understanding about reproductive health, sexuality and HIV/AIDS awareness. It is, however, argued by several educationists that this kind of programme should be properly integrated with the educational process for adolescents and young adults, rather than being an additive which is somehow to be transacted.

A few further observations in this regard may also be made.

(a) While there is multiplicity of programmes and schemes under the Ministry of HRD, certain areas seem to be neglected – mental health and



counseling programmes hardly exist, even though this is becoming a critical issue of concern in the changing socio-cultural and economic environment. Programmes for career guidance are also required for adolescents to enable them to select courses of study as per their aptitude and abilities.

(b) Holistic development and empowerment of adolescents through life-skills development programmes are limited in scope and coverage. Personality development programmes leading to

the participation of adolescents in nation building and the promotion of values have not begun to take shape.

(c) Vocational skills development programmes, preparing out of school adolescents for work participation, are scanty, both in coverage and content.

The special needs of adolescents in difficult circumstances are being addressed selectively by some ministries. Holistic programming is needed through inter-sectoral collaboration. (NIOS, 2007b)

## NGO INITIATIVES

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The problem of holistic development of adolescents is being addressed by several NGOs. Although their work is comparatively small, it presents models and designs which can be expanded on a large scale. In this section the case studies of two NGO's namely, the MV Foundation and Doosra Dashak, which work specifically in the areas of child labour and adolescents, are presented. Indeed, by its determination and commitment to eliminate child labour and to ensure that working children are admitted in schools and the schools function differently with a view to welcoming former child labour, the MV Foundation has set an example that is applauded universally. On a somewhat smaller scale, the Foundation for Education and Development, through its programme called Doosra Dashak, has evolved a design of holistic education for adolescent persons who are deprived of primary education.

Also, an attempt has been made to demonstrate the possibilities and scope of what can be done if government and non-government agencies resolve to face this challenge.

### ***MVFoundation: A Social Movement for Transforming Child Labour into School Students<sup>iv</sup>***

#### *Background and Coverage*

Education is the right of every individual. No child should be pushed out of school until he/she completes 10 years of schooling. Recognizing education and schools as a tool to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and deprivation, the Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation popularly known as MVF, was started in the year 1991 in Hyderabad. The aim was as simple and straightforward as any vision could be – to eradicate child labour through the universalization of quality education.

With strong conceptual under-pinning MVF's work encompasses a large segment of the society – ranging from landless poor agricultural labourers to migrant labourers, quarry workers and household labour. If one goes by the quantity, the MVF has to its credit over 4,00,000 working children now in schools, programme extends to almost the entire state of Andhra Pradesh

covering 6,000 villages, 137 mandals and 11 districts. 45,000 child labour have attended bridge courses and 3,000 school education committees and gram panchayats back the campaign against child labour. Five states are part of the movement and a number of areas are under 'influence'. However, the philosophy and approach of the MVF has much more to offer than the impressive quantities.

#### *Philosophical Base*

When poverty was conveniently ascribed as the reason for rampant increase in child labour, the MVF took a bold stand and refuted poverty as an argument to justify a large number of children being out of school. It insisted that the lack of a societal norm in favour of children's right to education is the root cause of increase in the incidence of child labour.

Denial of poverty as an escape route placed the MVF in a position of discord

with a large number of people who were quite ready to accept child labour as a symptom of dire poverty. According to the MVF philosophy, the poverty argument relied on ostensibly sound logic that any family with low income level in order to survive, send their children to work. Whereas the fact was that child labour provides a temporary solution to a long term problem that actually reinforces and perpetuates the conditions stated for its justification. 'Long term problems need long term solutions, and this is exactly what education is', was the MVF logic. Therefore, they placed considerable emphasis on motivation of parents as well as mobilizing the community for improvement in the quality of the education system. Processes have been built to bridge the gap between an illiterate household and the school system, keeping in view the large number of factors that work to sustain this gap.

#### **Box 3.1**

##### **Non-Negotiables in MVF's Philosophical Position**

- Rightful place of children is in school, not in the work place. All children must attend full-time formal day schools.
- Any child out of school is a child labour or a potential child labour.
- All labour is hazardous, and harms the growth and development of the child.
- There must be total abolition of child labour.
- Any justification perpetuating the existence of child labour is unacceptable.
- Any law regulating child labour is unacceptable.
- Non-formal or vocational education for out of school children is not the answer. It is a violation of their rights to receive full time mainstream education.

### *MVF Approach and Strategy*

As far as the approach goes, the MVF message is: Education is a fundamental right of every child and they should be able to get it irrespective of their caste, class, gender and religious identity. Based on a firm conviction of education as a right of every child, the MVF's approach recognizes the link between universalization of quality education with abolition of all forms of child labour explicit (e.g. in factories) or hidden in the form of domestic labour. This approach also recognizes the intrinsic importance of school to the growth and well being of individuals and calls for every possible effort to ensure that once enrolled they should be able to complete their education without disruption.

One of the essential aspects of this approach is its unwillingness to accept any parallel system of education, but to strengthen the existing system to deliver. This approach also recognizes the importance of working with the community so that pressure could be put on the system to ensure effective delivery. Emphasis is placed on stimulating grassroots action in the form of village, mandal or district level forums to ensure that all children are in school and complete their education.

In order to translate the above approach into action the MVF has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to break the nexus between child labour and illiteracy that include the following:

- Working with the community by stimulating an awareness and demand for education among the poor. This demand is not confined to parents but extends to all stakeholders including teachers, employers of children, youth groups, women's groups, elected local representatives as well as district and government officials.
- Work with local level democratic institutions to serve as watch dogs to ensure effective functioning of schools.
- Offering a bridge between child labourers and the school system to smoothen the transitory phase.
- Strengthening schools to offer an education which is relevant, qualitative and empowering.
- Modification of school governance systems to address the backlog of children joining schools, to respond to the needs of first generation learners and also to ensure retention of all children till they complete that education.
- And, finally, enrolling in bridge courses to ensure that all child labourers have opportunity to

prepare themselves for entry in the school in grades that are appropriate for their age and learning background.

### *Bridge Courses: A Bridge between the System and the Learners*

The bridge course strategy fulfils the gap between formal education system and the harsh realities of the working children, who many a time happens to be first generation learners. Bridge course is not intended to replace school but meant for readying older age children, mainly adolescents, to be mainstreamed into government schools. The need for such a course is based on the inadequacies of the formal system to take into account the special circumstances of the children entering schools with low learning levels, comparatively older aged, drop out or those who have completely missed the first chance of education. The formal system of education does not enable these children to embark on a journey of self discovery and it forbids their entry due to age related restrictions. Added to this, the language these children speak, their cultural background and family circumstances are all considered as being unsuitable and, therefore, children are made to feel unwanted. Through providing them an appropriate transitional education these courses prepare working children for adjustment

with the formal school system. There is no formal curriculum for these courses as it caters to different target groups and ages. These courses range from a few months to two years looking at the age of the children. However, the ultimate goal is to ensure 'mainstreaming' which provides these courses a focus as well as an agenda.

### *Mobilizing Support through Motivating Communities*

The very idea of community and parents taking lead in actualization of children's right to education necessitated a change in the attitude towards the community. Rallies, village to village marches, door-to-door surveys, street theatre, public meetings were the starting points. However, the confidence in poor people to struggle for equity and justice by seeking access to education as a matter of right was a challenging task which was made possible through debate and discussion and also through inculcation of commitment from within. Each gram panchayat has an educational activist trained by MVF with multiple roles – beginning from conducting a survey to identify non-school going children to helping children to cope with school, minimize dropouts and remaining in contact with parents to make sure that their interest for their children's education is sustained through positive feed back.

This was combined with another strategy of creating local forums of adolescents and youth. This is based on the realization that universalization of education necessitates building new alliances and coalitions for revitalizing the society as a whole. The role of these forums is also to take up individual cases of violation of child rights. These forums have played a pivotal role in ensuring acceptance of the social norm

that no child works and every child gets the opportunity to attend a formal school. To begin with these forums were informal in nature. However, as the work progressed, these informal collectives took shape into formal forums. They got institutionalized and took upon themselves the role of mobilizing parents to send their children to school in addition to working with the system to ensure the quality of schooling.

*To see teachers' insensitivity towards children was appalling, also their indifference towards girls, who escape marriage and combat all kinds of gender discrimination, was inexcusable. What worked was concerted efforts, dialogue and patience. Teachers are now as much involved in the movement as any of us.*

**Shantha Sinha**

### *Impact*

It is not easy to assess the impact of an initiative which has just not been limited to an 'intervention' but has been vital in offering a totally new perspective, a fresh dimension to an old problem. Child labour in India has been a recognized phenomenon and so are its cases. The MVF has challenged those very assumptions through action. This NGO has offered answers totally unheard of before. However, at a very basic level some areas of impact which can be listed are the following:

- Delving into the less quantifiable aspects of education, one of the most powerful benefits is an

increase in personal confidence. Across villages one message which is clear is the sense of identify that these children gain, and with that the realization of their innate intelligence.

- There is a large scale emulation of the MVF experience at the state level as far as policies and programmes go. The Andhra Pradesh Government's Back to School project at district and state level is a clear effort by the authorities to replicate the MVF model and the MVF is playing a significant role in providing technical support to the project. The initiation of the MVF model in five different

states in India is another example of the success of basic principles and approaches of the MVF.

- Role of teachers has gone through a sea change. Recognition of the fact that a teacher's role begins much earlier than a child enters school, is a significant change. Teachers themselves feel convinced that every child has a right to attend school, therefore, all efforts should be made to make sure that it happens. This realization is some thing that shapes educational agenda differently than before. Teachers also recognize that children should get an atmosphere and an experience that make them feel wanted and not force them to drop out.
- The approach that no intervention could actually substitute either the government or the community has proved beneficial. Community structures ensure an effective response to child labour problem and the system responds with offering good quality education. It is a two way process which necessitates government and the respective communities coming together for the fulfillment of a social norm.
- A large number of issues related to children's health, child marriage,

gender sensitivity, etc., have found a place in the educational agenda. Here also the MVF's approach has been quite unequivocal: when children are out of school their lives of tension and tribulations, their exploitative conditions of living, the violence they go through in families and at work place, and if the child is a girl, then their gender discrimination and the issue of early child marriages, all go unnoticed. Once they are in school they are in the reckoning and thus can gain access to all the rights they are entitled to as children.

- A large number of adolescent persons joining schools are something to be seen to be believed. Parents recognize their urge for education and the whole community supports their striving. The parents and the larger community seriously discuss issues of child marriage, infant mortality, child labour, etc.

#### *Doosra Dashak*

#### *Rationale and Objectives*

Doosra Dashak means the second decade. This project is about education and development of persons in the 11-20 age group, mainly adolescents, and to make it a lever for larger social and economic development.

The need for this project has arisen due to non-fulfillment of the goal of universal primary education and literacy and an increasing realization about the importance of this age group. Persons in this age group comprise about 22 percent of India's population, about 240 million persons. They go through physical and psychological changes which seriously impact their lives. There is a feeling of alienation among them and they are vulnerable to drug and alcohol addiction. These persons are at the threshold of productive work, family life and citizenship. Persons in this age group also have boundless energy and if they can be provided relevant education and skills and imbued with idealism they can become a source of social change and economic advancement.

The main objective of Doosra Dashak is to meet the basic learning needs of adolescent persons and relate it to life, work and environment and to enhance their understanding of issues of health/RH and making them aware about HIV/AIDS. The learning needs of adolescents are envisaged to include an awareness about the underlying causes of socio economic and gender inequality and to enhance vocational and life-skills. An important objective of this project is also to harness the energies of adolescent persons and youth for nation building. This is made possible through creation of cadres that may

provide educated, informed and responsible leadership. These cadres also are meant to work towards securing people's rights and pursue the constitutional postulates of national integration, democracy and secularism.

#### *Salient Features of the Project*

- *The locale:* The project is being implemented in nine blocks (covering a population of about 15,00,000) in Rajasthan. These blocks are known for extreme poverty and educational deprivation. Four of the blocks have a preponderance of a very backward tribal population. One of them is in the heart of the Thar desert in western Rajasthan, a backward, drought-prone block. Two of the blocks have a concentration of 'dalits' and the remaining two have a large pastoral Muslim population.
- *For whom:* It is expected that there would be about 10,000 beneficiaries, at least 50 percent of them women. So far the project has more than 4,000 adolescent "participants" and an equal number has been impacted through activities of peer education, science fairs and other field interventions. In addition, more than 15,000 community members, including parents of adolescents, representatives of PRIs and



government officials, have been associated.

- *Project components:* The main activities consist of people's mobilization, organization of multi-faceted programmes of basic education, life-skills training and programmes to improve the quality of life and environment. In addition to this, a range of continuing education activities are conducted to reinforce and sustain learning. Organizations of adolescents and women are set up in villages as well as at the block level to work jointly towards securing people's rights and entitlements.
- *Funding:* This project was started in June 2001 with funds provided by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, which continues to be the main funding support. In June 2002 it became a part of the UNESCO programme: Empowering Adolescent Girls to become agents of Social Transformation in South Asia. Funds are also provided by Oxfam India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Oxfam Novib, etc.

#### *Evaluation and Long-Term Impact*

A process of inbuilt evaluation has been institutionalized at all key levels of management to improve quality and

facilitate mid-course corrections. Successful implementation of this project is beginning to have a long-term impact on critical areas of India's national concern, including:

- educational levels, thereby preparing ground for social, cultural and economic advancement;
- health and nutrition, which would have inter-generational impact;
- girls' age at marriage, with obvious correlation for their retention in education, delaying child birth, and reducing mortality rate and morbidity among the new-borns;
- improvement in the functioning of the democratic institutions, especially the PRIs;
- environment and sanitation; and,
- creation of a new culture based on values of women's equality, human rights, democracy and secularism.

#### *Institutionalizing Residential Education*

In the last five years, the Doosra Dashak project has attempted to bring about a change in the lives of adolescent persons through a process of education, confidence building and empowerment. In this process an effort was made to enable the adolescent persons to imbibe a framework of values – ranging from mundane matters such as personal hygiene to a conviction in the secular and democratic

values. Gender equity, social justice and human rights also comprise indispensable aspects of all Doosra Dashak work. 42 residential training camps of four months duration have been organised in which more than 2,000 persons participated. Out of these about 80 percent belong to the SC/ST/other backward classes and minority communities. One third of the total number has been able to continue their studies in formal schools.

Since the commencement of the Doosra Dashak, we have shared with a large body of educational thinkers our deep concern about the limitations of the present system of education. Despite the recent changes made in the framework of curriculum and other aspects of teaching and learning processes, the age old constraints remain unmitigated, mainly because little change has taken place in teachers and school management.

This situation poses serious problems for those who are crossing the boundaries of childhood and are yet to come to the stage of adulthood. While a child still has time to learn various aspects related to life as he/she grows up, adolescents are frontally faced with challenges in respect of family life, civic and political responsibilities, pressures of livelihood, etc. They require education which provides them with the

opportunities to understand about themselves, the society around them and the kind of roles that they are expected to play in the society. The curriculum for them has to be different, more holistic in nature with a possibility to unfold knowledge offered by the changing world. They require curriculum which takes their experiences into account while helping them to learn new things. Recent researches show that this kind of experiential, integrated and holistic curriculum can be prepared and if appropriate circumstances are created it can make a real impact on the personality and attitudinal perspectives of adolescent learners.

Keeping in view the above perspective we undertook the task of curriculum development for unschooled adolescents. The basic approach was to build a curriculum which is based on the experiences of adolescents, taking note of contextual diversities, and the learning needs of these persons. It was clearly understood that this curriculum would be 'evolving' in nature with enough scope for learners as well as teachers to create new learning material and learning situations as and when required.

The curriculum was broadly divided into thematic areas which include language, mathematics, health/RH, life-skills and *samaj ki parakh* (analytical study of

society). However, attention was paid to see that these subjects are not taught in isolation. While teaching language attention was given to reflection on social as well as gender issues. Also, sessions on understanding the society should help in building articulation skills of adolescents. Gender and life-skills were woven into all issues.

What the DD has attempted to do is to create a complementary system of education – a multi-faceted system which complements the formal school system and without which the shortfalls of the latter could continue to imperil the country's future. This complementary system has the potentiality to provide relevant basic education to young people, who remained excluded from primary schooling – whose number in the country is between seven and eight crores. Although the efforts made in recent years have shown an increase in school enrolments the dropout rate continues to be alarming; the number of unschooled in 11-20 age group has remained undiminished. This is the challenge that the DD has tried to grapple with and in this process we have been surprised by what a well-constructed curriculum and sensitive teaching-learning process can achieve! Some of the conclusions which have emerged in recent years show that given a well-designed curriculum and

well planned residential education programme it is possible:

- to imbibe adolescent persons with constructive fervour for amelioration of their own and their family's condition;
- to bring about changes in their lives in a very personal sense affecting –
  - o personal sanitation
  - o inter-personal relations
  - o capacity to speak, argue and negotiate
  - o develop sensitivity in relationship with the opposite sex;
- to sow seeds of liberal attitude towards caste and religious differences; and,
- to develop the capacity for discernment.

#### *Implementation of NREG Act and Improvement of Public Services*

This Act was made applicable in Kishanganj (Baran district) and Abu Road blocks (Sirohi district) in 2006. Since the beginning the Doosra Dashak has fully involved itself in implementation of the Act. As a result 98 percent of the families have secured job-cards. A majority of the villages are getting the benefit of civil works opened by district/block administration. The Doosra Dashak field workers keep an eye on the manner in which work is assigned to the labour force, the manner in which it is measured and

assessment made of wages payable to the workers, and timeliness of payment of wages. A fairly large number of grievances have been reported which were taken up with block authorities, and where necessary with the district administration.

Now that the NREG Act is being implemented in all the districts a decision has been made to organize training for all the Doosra Dashak personnel in provisions of the NREG Act and its operational details. We expect that the Doosra Dashak personnel will play a role of some significance in facilitating implementation of this Act.

With increase in the number of adolescent participants and the local administration's recognition of the Doosra Dashak as an agency which they can rely for proper implementation of schemes, a decision was made to work toward improvement of public services such as schools, anganwadis, PHCs and health sub-centres, drinking water facility and shops opened under the public distribution system.

A four-fold strategy has been evolved for making an intervention in this regard. These are mentioned below:

*Measures to empathize with functionaries:* It was noted that most of the functionaries we were dealing with

are women. These women were, generally speaking, not treated with due consideration by the village community as well as the supervisory authorities. Many of the functionaries could have difficulties with their family and the professional environment. The Doosra Dashak approach is to align with the staff, understand their personal and professional problems and try to help them overcome those problems.

*Capacity enhancement of functionaries:* Since the life of the government staff is generally so drab and set in routine, involving these personnel in interesting trainings, rallies on people's rights, cultural programmes, etc., make them positive towards the suggestions being made by the Doosra Dashak personnel.

*Strengthening the system of accountability:* In the government system, several agencies are expected to ensure public institutions/facilities function properly. The Doosra Dashak decision was to strengthen this system of accountability so that the reform introduced is sustainable. The accountability system consists of

- Specific committees constituted to oversee the institutions /facilities;
- A hierarchical system of supervision;
- Panchayati Raj Institutions, mainly at the village and block levels.

*Providing complementary services:*

Generally, all facilities function at a minimal level of performance. Enhancing their activities (which in any case they are supposed to undertake) could make an enormous difference. For example, support of a library and games and sports in schools, health fair to motivate and inform pregnant women and mothers of small children, etc.

As a result of the work done with these village level institutions, small but significant improvements have begun to take place: teachers are more regular and attendance of school children has improved significantly; pregnant women welcome ANMs when they go for check-up and parents cooperate with immunization; problems with hand-pumps are attended to expeditiously and children in schools and anganwadis have their meal which is well-cooked and served in clean vessels.

*Impact*

The Doosra Dashak has been on the ground for the last seven years. Over this period of time a few things have emerged which may be treated as the impact of Doosra Dashak:

(1) If the community's confidence can be gained, neither poverty nor religious prejudice nor feudal attitudes come in the way of

adolescents' education. The comprehensive nature of work of Doosra Dashak motivates families to accept the changes which come about among boys and girls after their residential training. Whether it is the habit to clean their teeth, cut their nails, take regular bath, wash their clothes and making a demand for delay in marriage, parents and the elders in the village community are willing to listen.

(2) Organized action by adolescents brings about a change in the violence and injustice towards young people, particularly girls. Organizations of youth and women have the ability to question sexual violence towards girls in schools, discrimination against dalits and tribals. Right to information is a tool used to insist on rectitude.

(3) The proposition that if young people after they have undergone residential training are nurtured, given responsibility and their achievements and contributions are recognized, they can evolve as grassroots activists, has been validated. Generally speaking, they show gender sensitivity and seem to be in the process of overcoming caste and religious differences. The presence of these cadres makes a difference to the life of a

large section of poor families in villages. It is possible through them to better implement *Antyodaya Yojana*, ration shops to provide grocery at a fair price, employment opportunity to the needy and to prevent powerful elements from encroaching upon common lands. These activists can also work with government at times of flood, spread of malaria and to enlarge the coverage of immunization programmes.

- (4) Teachers and the education system can be motivated to improve their performance. Rather than taking a cynical attitude, teachers can be motivated to ensure regular attendance and to teach without inflicting punishment on children. When teachers improve their performance, the village community responds enthusiastically.
- (5) At the policy level there is recognition of adolescents as a distinct group which must be fully recognized in policies and programmes. Before the efforts made by the Doosra Dashak, hardly any notice was taken of the

learning needs of this large group. There is a perceptible difference in this regard at the policy level.

It may be befitting to conclude with the remark made by Professor Denzil Saldanha in his monograph on Doosra Dashak:

“Existence of Doosra Dashak may be viewed at multiple levels. At one level it is an activity, a project operating as an experiment in distinctly different areas of Rajasthan for the education and development of persons in the age group of 11-20, towards preparing them as catalysts for social change. At a slightly different level, it is an intervention on issues of gender equity so that men and women can find spaces to explore and express their potential and their concerns. At another level, it is a model which aims at influencing NGOs, government policies as well as international development thinking on the methods of working with deprived, rural adolescents. At a more fundamental level, it is a vision for a new society permeated with the values of equity, tolerance and coexistence”.

## CONCLUSION

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This is all that can be reported by way of education of adolescent persons in India. Indeed, there are a number of other small schemes of the government that are contributing to adolescents' education but their focus is blurred and contribution to numbers insignificant. Also, there are numerous NGOs which are directly or indirectly contributing to education of young people, but again not of much import. In addition to the National Institute of Open Schooling, there are some distance-learning programmes which provide educational opportunity to a small number of adolescents. If we do not take into account the persons who are receiving education in the regular school system, the total number of adolescents who are receiving education through these programmes in India would be between 300,000 and 400,000. It would be worth recalling that in a country with more than a billion population and about 240 million persons in the age group of adolescence, of whom 70 to 80 million are likely to be illiterate, or almost so, the number of persons receiving education is very small.

A mention may also be made of the National Literacy Mission, known now for its fading glory. Late in 1980s and 90s, the NLM was a promising campaign to take literacy and awareness building to all parts of our vast country. During those years of pride and hope, it was adolescent persons and youth who served as motivators and volunteer teachers. Even in its hay day, the NLM did not envisage life-skills programmes or inculcation of literacy of sufficiently high level to be self-sustaining. Since 1995, the NLM remains more in name than in substance. Leadership in government as well as in intellectual circles has realized the importance of need-based learning opportunities for adolescents and young adults, but no such programme has been started.

Persons who are deprived of education are likely to be persons from economically and socially most deprived sections of society – it has rightly been said that lack of education and poverty are two sides of the same coin. Nor is it surprising that neither the UNESCO nor

the Government of India nor any other official or non-government agency has paid attention to the follow-up of Goal 5 (Gender) of Jomtien conference and Goal 3 of the Dakar meet.

At the root of this neglect of education of young people is the inordinate pre-occupation of all concerned with primary, secondary and tertiary education, to almost complete neglect of the unschooled adolescent persons and young adults. This situation has been written on by activist thinkers like Rosa Maria Torres<sup>v</sup> and Birgit Brock-Utne.<sup>vi</sup> They have argued that there is a deliberate effort to shift attention from secondary and tertiary education in Africa to perpetuate the dependence of African political and intellectual leaders on the money and ideas of the north. Torres' view is that the exclusive attention to primary education in the EFA and MDGs results in neglect of adult literacy and life-long learning. She argues that if literacy and adult education programmes can be of substantial nature, they could infuse a new vitality among the poor and

struggling masses. This however, is not the preferred course for those who sponsored Jomtien and Dakar, namely the UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank.

It is hard to say whether there is a hidden agenda behind the neglect of learning needs of adolescent persons and young adults. The fact remains that little attention has been given to this area by those responsible for the follow-up of Jomtien and Dakar conferences. The Government of India took a step of far-reaching importance at the time of preparation of the Tenth Five Year Plan. The Working Group on Adolescents set up in the year 2000 made recommendations which could have ushered in sensible programmes and may have created awareness in this regard among international organizations. Instead, what we have are some well-written reports but little by way of concrete action. This is a challenge that the future of our country and, indeed, the developing world must face.



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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> UNESCO, 2000, *A Synthesis Report of Education for All 2000 Assessment for the Asia – Pacific Region*, Bangkok. It needs to be noted that this Assessment report went to some length to spell out indicators for the 6 EFA goals but confined its concern almost exclusively to primary education. In regard to Goal 5 of the 6 Jomtien WCEFA it made reference only to literacy rate in population aged 15-24.

<sup>ii</sup> This section draws substantially from the Working Group Reports of Tenth and Eleventh Five Year Plans.

<sup>iii</sup> Sub-group on Adolescent Education; Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Material in this section is drawn from MVF: A Social Movement – Transforming Child Labour into School Students by M Venkatarangaiya Foundation, 2007, Hyderabad.

<sup>v</sup> R.M. Torres has written extensively on this subject. By way of example see Torres, R.M., 2000, *One Decade of Education for All: The challenge ahead*, International Institute for Educational Planning, Buenos Aires.

<sup>vi</sup> Brock – Utne, Birgit, 2000, *Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind*, New York and London.