INDIA

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)

Twenty Third Joint Review Mission

July 21 – 28, 2016

Aide Memoire

Contents

Acronyms

ABL	Activity-Based Learning
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
ASMITA	All Schools, Monitoring, Individual Tracking, and Analysis
ATR	Action Taken Report
AWP&B	Annual Work Plan and Budget
BRC	Block Resource Centre
CA	Census Assessment
CAG	Comptroller and Auditor General of India
CCE	Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRC	Cluster Resource Centre
CWSN	Children with Special Needs
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DISE	District Information System for Education
DP	Development Partner
EC	European Commission
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
EVS	Environmental Science
FM	Financial Management
FM&P	Financial Management and Procurement
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOI	Government of India
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDA	International Development Association
IPF	Investment Project Financing
IRT	Item Response Theory
IUFR	Interim Unaudited Financial Report
JRM	Joint Review Mission
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
LEP	Learning Enhancement Program
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MIS	Management Information Systems
MP	Madhya Pradesh
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAS	National Achievement Survey
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research & Training
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGO	Non- Governmental Organization
NIC	National Informatics Centre

NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning & Administration
PAB	Project Approval Board
PFMS	Public Financial Management System
PMIS	Project Management Information System
PPS	Pre-Primary Section
RFD	Results Framework Document
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
RTE	Right to Education
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCERT	State Council for Educational Research and Training
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal 4
SIS	State Implementation Society
SLAS	State Level Achievement Survey
SMC	School Management Committee
SPD	State Project Director
SPO	State Project Office
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
Swap	Sector Wide Approach
TOR	Terms of Reference
TSG	Technical Support Group
UC	Utilization Certificate
UEE	Universal Elementary Education
UT	Union Territory

1 Introduction

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship program of the Government of India (GOI), implemented in partnership with State Governments, for universalizing elementary education (UEE) in India. SSA aims at providing relevant education to all children in the 6-14 age group. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A has come into force with effect from 1st April, 2010. SSA norms have been revised to correspond with the provisions of the RTE Act.

SSA is a national program largely funded through national resources with limited external funding by the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA). The program provides for intense monitoring mechanisms including provision for bi-annual Review Missions.

This is the 23rdJoint Review Mission (JRM) and the Mid Term Review(MTR) of World Bank support to SSA III was held from ***July 21st to 28th, 2016***. The Terms of Reference for the Mission and details of the Mission composition are attached as Annex 1. This is a desk based review, held in New Delhi, with extensive presentations made by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), SSA State Project Directors and Principal Secretaries, and national institutions such as the National Councilfor Education Research and Training (NCERT), and National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). The mission team comprised Abhimanyu Singh (Mission Leader), Amit Kaushik, Jayshree Oza, Renu Singh,Kadayapreth Ramachandran, Vyjayanthi Sankar, and Samar Ray from the GOI and Shabnam Sinha, Umbreen Arif, Marguerite Clarke, Neil Butcher, Supriti Dua, and Heenaben Doshi from the World Bank.

The Mission would like to record its deep appreciation for the support received from the Department of School Education and Literacy, MHRD, the Technical Support Group (TSG), the national Institutions, and the teams from the participating States who made presentations, participated in discussions and provided detailed information to the Mission.

2 Mission Objectives

JRMs are conducted with an objective of reviewing progress in implementation of SSA with respect to SSA Goals, especially the interventions and its results in terms of agreed indicators, and to discuss follow-up action. JRMs also review the actions taken upon the recommendations made by previous JRMs. This mission assessed the implementation of SSA with special reference to the area of quality improvement. The focus was on: strengthening early learning continuum (preschool to lower primary); assessing the meaningful information on quality, strengthening the elementary level in a subject-specific manner, teacher preparation, learning assessments, institutional strengthening, monitoring and evaluation, and social audit.

Following from the Overview and Key Issues, the report focuses on the key focal areas that were the mission mandate:

- Strengthening early learning (preschool to lower primary);
- Assessing the quality of teaching and assessment strategies;
- Supporting robust teacher training systems;
- Assessing modalities for strengthening national and state level learning assessment systems;

- Reviewing social audit mechanisms under SSA

3 Overview and Key Recommendations

3.1 Overview

The JRM comes at a critical juncture, coinciding with the unfolding of a nation-wide grassroots driven process for formulation of a new education policy after 30years, the high level initiatives for tracking school children in government and private schools across the country *ASMITA*(All Schools, Monitoring, Individual Tracking, and Analysis) and the proposed annual census of learning assessments of all children in government and government-aided schools from Class 1-12 for a performance-based grading of schools and states.

The confluence of these events with the World Bank MTR of SSA III provides a unique opportunity to stake stock of the progress and achievements for achieving UEE in India, address persisting bottlenecks and emerging challenges, make mid-course adjustments, and align country efforts to the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) 'Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All' and its Framework for Action adopted by 160 countries, including India, at the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea on 19-22 May 2015. The new global vision for education for the next 15 years should help to accelerate India's efforts on access, equity and inclusion, quality, and learning outcomes, within a lifelong learning approach.

The collaboration between MHRD and the World Bank, the European Union, and other development partners manifested through the implementation of SSA for the last 16 years is now recognized as one of the global success stories in making significant progress towards the EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) goals of universalization of primary education and gender parity in schools since 2000.

A UNESCO case study on 'Promising Practices in EFA' (2015) acknowledges the contribution of the targeted and focused interventions under the government-led and Bank-assisted SSA for India's ability to bring about a sharp decline in out-of-school children through near universal access, major investments in school infrastructure, narrowing gender and social gaps in schools, special focus on backward areas and decentralized interventions, in partnership with civil society organizations and local communities. However, it draws attention to low attendance and high dropout rates, especially among vulnerable children, as well as the persistence of large inter-state variations in primary schooling and adult literacy. In the context of the JRM focus on improving quality and learning outcomes, the case study speaks to the challenges of the limited opportunities for pre-school education in government schools, the low level of teaching activity in classrooms and the prevalence of rote learning as a major one-way pedagogical approach. It states that learning surveys of the Annual Status of Education Reportor ASER (2006) and National Achievement Survey or NAS (Class V; 2012) have revealed slow and unsteady progress in the quality of education in the last decade. One of the major conclusions of the UNESCO report is that EFA goals cannot be achieved through 'Quick fix' strategies, but instead need long-term focused interventions.

Moving forward from the 22nd JRM, the mission was pleased to note there is a move by MHRD to rejuvenate national assessment systems to improve quality of learning outcomes through a

comprehensive approach for making the system more accountable and transparent. There is a two-pronged strategy by MHRD to use NAS/SLAS as a policy instrument for gauging the overall health of the system supplemented by a Census Assessment as an accountability instrument bridging the gap in communication of learning outcomes to the stakeholders – the teachers, parents and the community. This also links to the JRM's recommendation of enhancing social accountability through better networked and strengthened School Management Committees (SMCs). The MHRD initiative of putting in place a large data warehouse (*ASMITA*)will hopefully establish a tool for improving and monitoring the system for reaching the unreached. It is heartening also to hear that this will be complemented by launch of theSHAGUNportal, as a way of showcasing best practices and keeping track of what is happening in SSA at State and District.

Related to this is the issue of teacher development and accountability. It is a matter of concern that 70% of SSA funds go towards teacher salaries while less than 1% is provided for teacher training. The MHRD strategy for ring- fencing funding to quality parameters through a separate category of funding window is appreciated. It is important that all states develop guidelines for planning in-service training and have dedicated funds made available to each state for teacher development. Innovative use of ICT for supplementing teacher training is strongly recommended

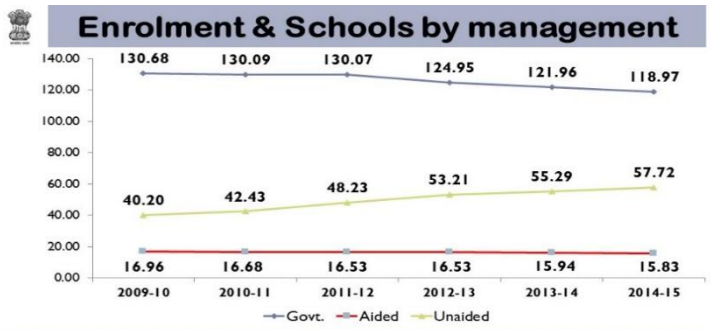
Further, to address the challenge of universalizing Early Childhood Care and Education(ECCE) by 2030,the JRM feels that Government of India needs to undertake focussed efforts urgently. The JRM's recommendations for strengthening early learning in government schools and introduction of at least one year of pre-primary education, supported by SSA funding, are made in this context. GOI and MHRD may consider the constitution of a high-level inter-ministerial task force with participation of states, international development partners, and CSOs to address issues of multi-sectoral coordination, capacity building, management and funding of ECCE taking into consideration India's as well as the experience of other countries, particularly developing countries in the Asian region. ECCE should form an integral component of externally aided programmes for UEE.

Last, and most importantly, continuous strengthening of capacities in planning and supervision cannot be emphasized strongly enough. The Mission feels that there is a need at all levels to revisit the very spirit of the SSA Framework and its underlying principles. To this end, continuous reorientation of policy makers and implementers at the national and state levels should be considered. At the same time, a third party evaluation of the role of TSG and the nature of its support to the Ministry and the States may be considered, so as to keep it relevant to programme implementation with appropriate strengthening and capacity building.

3.2 World Bank Mid-Term Review of SSA: Key Takeaways

The World Bank has been supporting SSA since 2004, and the present phase of support to SSA III started in 2013-14. The 23rd JRM marks the midpoint of the World Bank support to SSA III. The gains made by SSA since its inception are impressive. Access has been universalized, there are 1.45 millionschools, more than 98% of habitations have access to a primary school, and nearly 98% have access to an upper primary school. Twenty-four States have reported universal access as per State neighbourhood norms. Pupil-teacher ratios have improved significantly. Student-classroom ratios have shown considerable improvement. The share of the population of SC and ST children in elementary schools is more than their share in the population.

The ProjectDevelopment Objective (PDO) of SSA III is ***to improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India***.
However, despite steady progress on access and inclusion parameters, progress on improving education outcomes does not show a commensurate growthtrajectory. Enrolment in government and government aided schools has been slowly but surely receding (Fig. 1) while enrolment in private schools is increasing.



Schools by management

Management	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Government	10,46,356	10,64,518	10,78,330	10,85,273	10,93,969	10,80,744
Aided	71,039	70,830	72,879	68,199	67,984	66,695
Unaided	1,82,408	1,93,730	2,26,456	2,39,726	2,52,006	2,62,147

Source : UDISE

FIGURE 1

The World Bank undertook a study to assess the return on investment on financing of elementary education in India which showed some disturbing facts. During the period of 2011-12 to 2014-15, the average learning levels of Class V students (as reflected in National Achievement Surveys) declined between 6 and 33 points, while per-child expenditure increased by more than 200 percent. This has serious implications for labor market productivity of the individual passing out through this elementary education system: the decrease in learning outcomes is expected to lead to approximately 11.9% reduced earnings for the individual over the lifetime. (World Bank, 2016).

Teacher salaries have increased massively, and are now 70% of the total financial allocation of SSA (Fig. 2). A mere 15% is allocated for quality improvement activities. Further, there is a sharp reduction in allocations of funds to SSA by the GOI. Since 2013-14, GOI allocations have dropped sharply and have subsequently continued declining, seriously affecting quality reform initiatives.

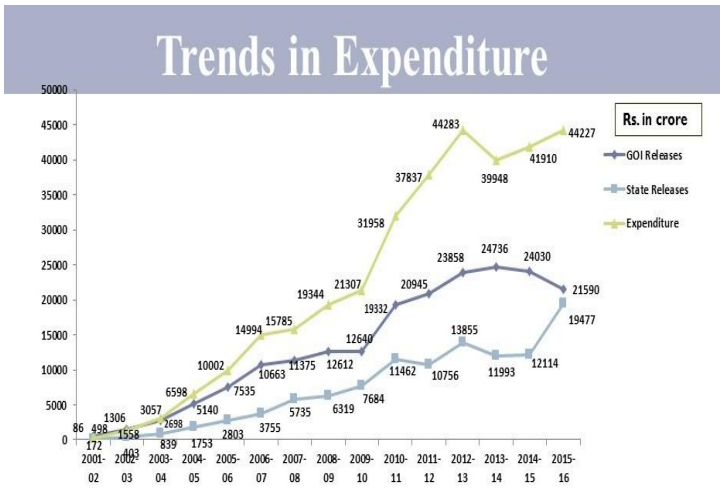


FIGURE 2

The Aide Memoire presents in detail key concerns identified by the MTR. In summary, these are (i) a steady decrease and stagnation in learning outcomes; (ii) a very large, inefficiently deployed, and financially unsustainable teacher workforce; (iii) lack of teacher accountability; (iv) slowdown in systemic efficiency with lack of capacities in educational functionaries at different levels (v) weak monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, and (vi) ineffective social accountability mechanisms.

The mission was pleased to note the urgency on the part of the MHRD towardsimplementing focused reforms for improving learning outcomes in children and the political support from the top leadership in this regard is evident. The MHRD is currently providing strategic attention to quality improvement efforts. Financial allocations under SSA towards quality initiatives, as reported by MHRD, are expected to increase from 6.8% (2015-16) to 9.06% (2016-17). The MHRD has identified three categories of activities for SSA support, and Category II will focus on quality improvement (movingout teacher salaries to Category III). MHRD proposes to ring fence funds sanctioned to states to focus on components for improving learning outcomes. A large M&E network called *ASMITA*(All Schools, Monitoring, Individual Tracking, and Analysis) is beingdesigned, and this will become a tool for improving and monitoring the system for greater accountability for quality reforms.

Such massive reforms for quality need greater infusion of funds. GOI allocations for SSA have been reduced and are largelyinadequate for improving the quality of education. The MHRD had presented the World Bank with Interim Unaudited Financial Reports(IUFRs) for FY 2015-16 for the period of April to August 2015, for which reimbursement has been made by the Bank. The MHRD has now expressed a need to present the Bank with IUFRs for September 2015 to March 2016 for further fund releases to meet the needs of quality reform processes being undertaken. The World Bank will review this request and respond to MHRD when approached for more funds. Moving forward, the MHRD wishes the Bank to provide additional resources to SSA as ring-fenced funding for quality reform.

Based on the MTR/JRM findings, the following actions are proposed:

1) The Bank support to date has been Investment Project Financing (IPF) using a Sector Wide Approach (Swap) with the funds going to a common SSA funding pool. However, given that 70% of funds go to teacher salaries and other input-oriented functions, there is a need to ensure more efficient use of resources. The World Bank therefore proposes a restructuring of its support to undertake a more results-based financing of SSA. This will mean disbursement being linked to results.
2) Funding will henceforth be ring-fenced to support quality improvement initiatives, with the broad areas to be jointly identified with the MHRD during restructuring
3) The jointly agreed and negotiated Results Framework Document (RFD) for project monitoring under SSA III presently show data gaps, with some targets not having been met. The RFD will therefore need to be reviewed and revised as a part of the restructuring process.
4) MHRD and the World Bank will jointly explore project restructuring and additional funding needed (if any).

3.3 Key Recommendations

1) MHRD, in consultation with States, may wish to follow a two-pronged strategy for assessment of learning outcomes: (i) NAS/SLAS as a sample-based policy instrument for gauging the overall health of the system, and (ii) census assessment as an accountability instrument for understanding the achievement levels of each student,to be undertaken by the teacher/community member using a simple, common testbased on common learning indicators.

2) MHRD may create a National Task Force (NTF) for guiding important strategic decisions regarding the implementation of the two-pronged assessment strategy. The Task Force could have officials from MHRD, experts from NCERT, non-governmental organisations, and independent experts. The Task Force could support the design and smooth conduct of the census assessments as well as improvements to NAS and SLAS that will provide the stakeholders in the system with granular, diagnostic information for improving the learning levels of our children.

3) MHRD and the Statesmay formulate internal capacity-building road maps for Large-Scale Assessments and Classroom Assessments. This would involve (i) identifying a dedicated team to work on assessments; (ii) putting in place mechanisms for continuity and knowledge management of specialized skills built in the team; (iii) building the team's expertise and understanding on all aspects of large scale assessments; and (iv) implementing training programmes for developing teachers' understanding and ability in how to assess their students' learning.

4) The MHRD should create enabling norms in the policy framework, reviving the Innovation grant component under SSA on ECCE to introduce and strengthen the early learning in schools and introduction of at least one year of pre-primary education as an initial step.

5) Existing work on developing standards for various grades and teacher professional development may continue. Similar initiatives could also be started for pre-primary education, with an emphasis on developmentally appropriate practices.

6) *Comprehensive Human Resources Information Management System (HRMIS) at state level:* Each state should develop an HRMIS tohelp inteacherdeployment/re-deploymentwithpayrollmanagementandpredictionsofteacherrequirements.This can also be tied to teachers' CPD as well as storage of password protected service books for each employee.

7) The MHRD may take steps to ensure that all states develop guidelines for planning in-service training and CPD; objectives, content, scheduling, identification of teachers and their needs. Further dedicated funds for CPD may be made available to each state under the AWP&Bs.

8) The MHRD may require all states to develop teacher performance indicators to be used for teacher performance management including appraisal. The guideline document of Performance Indicators on Teacher Performance Standards developed by NCERT may be used as a reference document.

9) SMC rules may be modified to provide them more powers to monitor teacher presence and attendance.

10) Since the MHRD proposes to have learning indicators disclosed at the school level for community audit of learning outcomes, as well as data to be collected by *ASMITA*, SMCs may be equipped to handle this responsibility effectively and to use the *ASMITA* data for school-level planning and decision-making purposes. MHRD may prepare before the next JRM commences, a model national SMC training package that should include issues around teacher accountability; monitoring learning outcomes and handling data for school management.

11) MHRD may initiate states into the concept of a federation of SMCs and organize periodical meetings/conferences to enable SMC members to share experiences and identify best practices that could be widely diffused. MHRD may organize a first such event before the next JRM as a pilot initiative to test the waters.

12) Define more tightly the priority issues that require monitoring as part of SSA through *ASMITA*(which will subsume the current U-DISE facility) with a clear roadmap and framework for enabling systematic analysis and use of data collected through *ASMITA*at various levels.

13) MHRD mayprepare a suitable training plan (before the next JRM) to cover aspects like micro-planning, data analysis and use, plan preparation, appraisal, etc, for various levels including policy makers from MHRD downwards, including the State Implementation Society, district officials, BRCs and CRCs, and the national institutions like NCERT, NUEPA, and NCTE. The plan should include an orientation of policy makers at all these levels to the SSA Framework itself.

14) Undertake a third party evaluation of the role of TSG and the nature of its support to the Ministry and the States, so as to keep it relevant to programme implementation with appropriate strengthening and capacity building.

3.3.1 Financial Management

15) *Budget and Fund Flow*: Budget and fund flow should be appropriately projected to capture the trail of treasury mode devolution of funds. Some steps that may facilitate timely fund flows include: (i) communication of the indicative program budgets to states, so that these can be reflected in the respective state budgets appropriately; (ii) active engagement of SIS in complying and following-up with the various State procedural requirements involved in release of funds from respective treasuries; and (iii) proactive planning at the SIS end to enable speedy usage/transfers of funds, once the same are received in their Bank accounts.

16) *Accrual system of accounting*: Dedicated time-bound action is required to ensure that accrual system of accounting is adopted by all accounting units from the primary to the SIS level. This is of key importance if income/expenditures, assets/ liabilities and fund availability for the program is to be correctly reflected.

3.3.2 Procurement

17) The FM&P Manual may be updated in line with the agreed procurement thresholds before the next JRM.

18) The initial finding of the World Bank post-procurement review (PPR) that the FM&P Manual is not being followed in many cases across the country may be communicated to all States immediately and corrective action taken as necessary.

19)

4 Key Focal Areas

4.1 Learning Assessments

4.1.1 Major Achievements and Developments

There has been limited progress in implementing the assessment-related recommendations of the 22nd JRM, including to develop anchored performance-level descriptors to describe students' results on NAS and to release the raw NAS data for further analysis by States. Progress was made in areas related to assessment, such as the development of class-wise learning outcomes for all subjects from pre-primary level to grade 8. Once finalized, these outcomes will be shared on notice boards in all schools, and should help stakeholders, including parents and community members, to better understand the learning expectations for each class.

In a new development since the last JRM, there is a move by MHRD to turn the 2016-17 NAS into a census study of the learning outcomes of all children across the country. The intent is to send a messageto teachers and the larger educational communityabout the importance of learning outcomes plus accountability for same.

4.1.2 Issues and Challenges

- **Quality of the NAS and State Level Achievement Surveys (SLAS):** A test cannot add value to learning improvement efforts unless the test items themselves are diagnostic[1] in the first place. Many NAS and SLAS items fail to meet these standards. For example, some reading comprehension items in NAS test papers do not necessarily require the student to actually read the passage to answer the questions; test items contain incorrect/erroneous information; etc.

  There is also a need to move away from reporting results on the NAS and SLAS in the formofthe percentage of questions that students answered correctly and towards reporting student results against anchored performance levels, which is more instructionally relevant. A few States have moved in this direction, but the same is required from more States. It is important to encourage States that are already doing good work in this area to move ahead on their own trajectories and not stop what has been already started, while raising the bar for all States to meet minimum quality standards for large-scale assessments.

- **Capacity of Central and State Institutions:** Given that learning assessments are being increasingly mainstreamed for tracking outcomes, both the Centre and the States might consider enhancing their staff capacity and knowledge in the specialized skills required to carry out such assessments effectively. This may require dedicated funding and other short- and long-term support for staff. Without such capacity enhancement, the potential of these assessments to identify learning problems and how to address them will be limited.

[1]Diagnostic Items can pinpoint the actual misconception or error in student thinking based on the answer response selected by the student. Designing the wrong-answer options to be plausible is more important for diagnostic items than just capturing the right answer.

Embarking on the Census Approach: A census assessment, by the nature of its scale and the need to manage logistics and costs, is frequently subject toquality restrictions in terms of the value and depth of the information it can provide on student learning. These restrictions may include the need for the test to be short and simple, built around a common paper for all subjects; a higher likelihood of the data being corrupted; and a greater chance of delays in data reporting. They can result in a test that is limited in its ability to inform pedagogy or teacher training. If there are attempts to use the data for ranking of schools (based on outcomes), the test will become high stakes, and several forces in the system will work at cross purposes, thus defeating the intended purpose. While States like Gujarat and Haryana have attempted to carry out census assessments, they have clearly differentiated their purpose from other assessment efforts and have simultaneously used a sample-based diagnostic to generate the more detailed information needed for policy and planning.

Moving forward, MHRD may wish to ensure that the tracking of learning outcomes is done using a two-pronged strategy: (i) a census assessment for signalling the importance of learning outcomes and for providing a way for the local community and others to hold teachers accountable for ensuring that their children learn; and (ii) a sample-based NAS and SLAS to continue providing actionable feedback on learning gaps for policymaking.

1) **Census Assessment**would be administered by local teachers in their classrooms, providing each teacher with an understanding of the achievement levels in his/her classroom on a simple, common test and messaging a signal of seriousness and accountability to the education community. These tests would be based on common learning indicators, which would be publicly disclosed in each school to make the community aware of what students are expected to know at each level. As a quality control measure,a percentage of schools may further be assessed using, for example, officers of the State and School Management Committee (SMCs), and volunteers, amongst others, to build accountability and awareness.

2) **NAS and SLAS:** It would be beneficial to ramp up efforts to ensure thatNAS and SLAS meet internationally-recognized quality standards for rigorous assessment. The sample-based NAS could be continued as a detailed, full-length diagnosticassessment (across all three grades) using trained evaluators. Private schools may be included considering that a large proportion of children are in these schools. All future NAS surveys would ideally include representative samples of CWSN and socially backward groups. CWSN would need to be tested using appropriately designed measures and tools,taking account of the specific nature of different special needs. States would continue with SLAS and potentially link to the NAS via common learning indicators (which are under development) in an effort to make it easier to interpret the results from both assessments in a common way. For both the SLAS and NAS, meeting quality standards will involve: (i) attention to appropriate test and item design; (ii) standardized administration; (iii) developing anchored, performance-level descriptions of student performance; (iv) releasing the NAS and SLAS databases in a format conducive for further analysis, along with the assessment tools; and (v) using the results for informing teacher training and policy.

4.1.3 Recommendations

1) MHRD, in consultation with States, may wish to follow a two-pronged strategy for assessment of learning outcomes: (i) NAS/SLAS as a sample-based policy instrument for

gauging the overall health of the system, and (ii) census assessment as an accountability instrument for understanding the achievement levels of each student, to be undertaken by the teacher/community member using a simple, common testbased on common learning indicators.

2) MHRD may create a National Task Force (NTF) for guiding important strategic decisions regarding the implementation of the two-pronged assessment strategy. The Task Force could have officials from MHRD, experts from NCERT, non-governmental organisations, and independent experts. The Task Force could support the design and smooth conduct of the census assessments as well as improvements to NAS and SLAS that will provide the stakeholders in the system with granular, diagnostic information for improving the learning levels of our children.

3) MHRD and the Statesmay formulate internal capacity-building road maps for Large-Scale Assessments and Classroom Assessments. This would involve (i) identifying a dedicated team to work on assessments; (ii) putting in place mechanisms for continuity and knowledge management of specialized skills built in the team; (iii) building the team's expertise and understanding on all aspects of large scale assessments; and (iv) implementing training programmes for developing teachers' understanding and ability in how to assess their students' learning.

4.2 Strengthening Early Learning

4.2.1 Major Achievements and Developments

There has been some progress in implementing initiatives that promote learning in early grades. *Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat*, launched in 2014 is an excellent twin-track initiative aimed at improving language development by creating an enduring interest in reading and writing with comprehension and creating a natural and positive interest in mathematics related to the physical and social world. 19 states have provided supplementary material for reading and 24 states have set up reading corners. It is heartening to note that 13 states have dedicated teachers for classes 1 and 2 and 21 states have reported providing dedicated time for independent reading. Barkha books developed by NCERT have been translated into Telugu, Marathi, Konkani, and Gurmukhi, and these books have also been adapted for children with special needs (CWSN).

The Activity-Based Learning (ABL) methodology of Tamil Nadu, Nali Kali ofKarnataka and the Learning Enhancement Program (LEP) of Haryana are good examples of state initiatives towards improving children's early literacy skills through a system wide approach.

4.2.2 Issues and Challenges

Successive JRMs have made recommendations, in this context, to pay greater attention to the early learning needs of children. *Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat* is seen as an important and timely initiative to promote reading and writing in early grades. Through this initiative, some States have made a promising beginning in providing teaching learning material and dedicated teachers for early learners in Classes I &II. There is also a perceptible movement towards attaching pre-primary sections to government primary schools and co-locating Anganwadis in government school campuses.

We note that, while India has made impressive progress in increasing GER in pre-primary education from 19% in 1999-2000 to 58% in 2011 (UIS, July 2015), this is characterized by vast inter-state, rural-urban, and income disparities. India still has along way to go in universalizing ECCE in terms of Target 4.2 of the Education 2030 which calls for ensuring that, by 2030,all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. To this end, countries are asked to put in place integrated and inclusive policies and legislation that guarantees the provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education, paying special attention to reaching the poorest and most disadvantaged children through ECCE services. This calls for integrated multisector ECCE policies and strategies supported by coordination among ministries responsible for education, nutrition, health, social and child protection water/sanitation, etc. and secure adequate resources for implementation.

There is a critical need to maintain continuity across curriculum, learning standards, and pedagogical practices for children during early years. [2]Given that the NAS, 2015 highlighted that the aggregate learning outcome levels for Class V students declined by 6 to 33 points during the period 2011-12 to 2014-15, across States and across subjects, we need to recognize that pre-school education is the foundation for realizing the quality targets of SSA.

Analysis of the 2015-16 (provisional) District Information System for Education (DISE) data (see Annex 4) shows almost 19.43% government schools already have an attached pre-primary section (PPS). A State/UT wise disaggregation of data shows that 20 States/UTs have >10 percent of government schools with PPSs, while 16 states have a higher than 15% of PPS presence. Six states show more than 80% of primary schools with a PPS section. In addition, 36% of government schools have co-located Anganwadis.Although the RTE Act recommends entry age into Grade I as six years, in 23 states, the entry age for Grade I is five years. Further, as per the latest ASER data, 56% of five-year olds in rural India are attending Grade I in schools. Anecdotally, a large number of underage children have been known to attend government schools, only some of whom are enrolled and the others probably accompanying their elder sibling.

These statistics indicate the need for a clear policy direction on ECE and convergence between Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and SSA. Internationally the trend among countries is to integrate early childhood programs under one ministry or department, usually education, and offer at least two years of free pre-schooling before compulsory schooling begins. The shift of early childhood programs in education systems has happened in countries like France, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Germany, New Zealand, Spain, Slovenia, England, Scotland, Brazil, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Vietnam, China, and Malaysia. In these countries, early childhood programs are set up to deliver care and education to preschool children in one seamless program.

[2]The draft National Policy on Education (2016) suggests 'expanding early childhood education services to ensure that all pre-school age children aged 4-5 years attain the learning and developmental readiness required for smooth transition to primary education, with particular attention to children belonging to disadvantaged population groups'.

Although some progress has been made by NCERT in developing class-wise learning outcomes, these are confined to Grade 1-8 only and do not address PPS.

4.2.3 Recommendations

1) The MHRD should create enabling norms in the policy framework, reviving the Innovation grant component under SSA on ECCE to introduce and strengthen the early learning in schools and introduction of at least one year of pre-primary education as an initial step.

2) Existing work on developing standards for various grades and teacher professional development may continue. Similar initiatives could also be started for pre-primary education, with an emphasis on developmentally appropriate practices.

Teacher Management, Development, and Accountability

4.2.4 Major Achievements and Developments

It is heartening to note the use of technology for efficient teacher management e.g. the launch of *Prashikshak* in July 2016, an e-governance initiative for improving the quality of government Teacher Education Institutions such as District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET).

The Justice Verma Commission Report suggested that the national and State governments should 'evolve guidelines and principles for the assessment of teacher performance and teacher audit.' and use Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to aid career decisions, review contracts and consider service conditions of teachers. The Report also highlighted that CPD is currently not linked to appraisal, promotion, or career progression.

4.2.5 Issues andChallenges

Teacher Management

The mission was apprised large teacher vacancies, single teacher schools and lack of subject teachers at the upper primary level (Fig.3). The existence these issues is testimony that teacher management (recruitment, deployment, service conditions, promotions, and professional development up to retirement) needs urgent attention. As an example, the Mission was apprised of the fact that lack of or absenteeism of teachers contributes to the poor performing schools as per the *Shala Siddhi*school assessment program of Madhya Pradesh (MP).

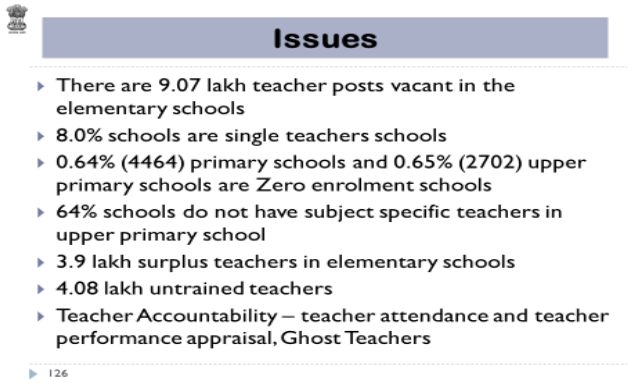


FIGURE 3

Teacher Deployment: A large number of teacher vacancies are due to poor rationalization (re-deployment) of teachers besides lack of regular recruitments by States. Given that 64% schools do not have subject specific teachers in upper primary school, it is evident that teacher

deployment to remote and rural schools continues to remain a challenge, with the result that the most disadvantaged children are denied quality education.

Accountability: Teacher management issues including 'ghost' teachers and schools with zero enrolment' as mentioned in the MHRD presentation that affects classroom processes, school functioning and is a matter of concern from efficiency perspective. Short duration of contracts for contract teachers is demotivating and results in the system losing a large number of experienced teachers from government schools. There is no system of incentives for teachers and Head Masters to encourage them to move to remote location schools or to perform better. For example, the *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya*(KGBV) system ensures that teacher salaries are ring fenced whether the teachers are in place or not and management arrangements are encouraged to ensure teacher availability. This is a good example of the state level system placing trust in local managements by placing funds at their disposal to ensure complete availability of teachers.

Teacher Training: The major challenge in the sphere of teacher effectiveness lies both in the urgent need to help train a large numbers of teachers recruited without the requisite qualifications, and in the requirement to foster the continued professional growth of teachers through in-service programmes. The Mission was informed that there are 4.08 lakh untrained teachers in the system and that the milestone for ensuring that all teachers had gained requisite qualifications as per the RTE Act had been missed. There will undoubtedly be pressure on States to get the prescribed qualifications of teachers through distance mode. It will be critical to ensure that effective checks and balances are put in place for provisioning of appropriate learner support systems consisting of professional tutoring, counselling, assessment, and credentialing, with feedback loops built in at each level.

Total coverage of teachers through in-service training is only 28%, as per UDISE 2014-15, which highlights the need to explore technology and find innovative ways to reach out to teachers to fulfil their training needs. Only 0.97% of the SSA budget for 2016-17 was allocated for teacher training while 70% of the SSA budget goes to the salaries, thereby raising concerns regarding the importance given to this component.

Furthermore, the results of a study conducted by NCERT (2012) across 15 States that examined effect of in-service training on classroom transactions found that there was great variation across States as well as significant lacunae in in-service training. Most training programmes have issues of lack of needs assessment, cascade model leading to dilution, lack of funds and funds flow, lack of systems of identification of in-service trainees, etc.

Continuous Professional Development: CPD implies a necessary continuous focus under SSA of improving teacher's subject knowledge and pedagogy, based on identified gaps as well as requirements of changing times in educational policy and practice, and suggests that improvement of teaching is largely the responsibility of teachers and schools. Traditional one-time training programmes have been proven to be ineffective with moderate to poor learning teacher outcomes, and limited transfer of knowledge and skill to the school and classroom.

The process of continuing professional development of teachers may be expanded to include different types of support. These could include: (a) Early tenure coaching involving experienced teachers, principals or specialists as mentors for observing classes of new teachers and offering

them feedback; (b) Peer learning involving planning lessons, observing one another's classes and providing feedback; (c) enabling teachers to interact with different groups such as subject groups to share issues, receive advice and develop resources; (d) helping teachers to interact with scientists, scholars, and college teachers; (e) setting up voluntary professional teacher networks and ICT enabled online subject teacher groups; (f) building a repository of curricular material and resources (print and digital) at the district, block and cluster levels to help teachers in preparing for their classes and for self-guided study; (g) conducting demonstration classes by teachers who are good at subject and pedagogy for the benefit of other teachers who want to observe the classes and learn and creation a repository of demonstration classes using ICT for sharing with all the teachers; (h) study leave for further studies; and (i) participation in seminars, exposure visits, e-learning communities etc.

4.2.6 Recommendations

1) *Comprehensive Human Resources Information Management System (HRMIS) at state level:* Each state should develop an HRMIS tohelp inteacherdeployment/re-deploymentwithpayrollmanagementandpredictionsofteacherrequirements.This can also be tied to teachers' CPD as well as storage of password protected service books for each employee.

2) The MHRD may take steps to ensure that all states develop guidelines for planning in-service training and CPD; objectives, content, scheduling, identification of teachers and their needs. Further dedicated funds for CPD may be made available to each state under the AWP&Bs.

3) The MHRD mayrequire all states to develop teacher performance indicators to be used for teacher performance management including appraisal. The guideline document of Performance Indicators on Teacher Performance Standards developed by NCERT may be used as a reference document.

4.3 Partnerships and Social Accountability

4.3.1 Major Achievements and Developments

Facilitating community involvement in elementary education has been an important strategy for accelerating progress towards the SSA goals. Participation of the community in the planning and organization of school activities is sought through the constitution of SMCs. A total of 31 states/UTs have prepared training modules for training of SMC members. Topics covered by these modules include: monitoring teacher/students attendance; monitoring of Mid-Day Meals; awareness on issues related to hygiene in and around school (*Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan*); monitoring and facilitation of timely distribution of text books; keeping a check on any kind of discrimination in the School; accounts keeping; awareness of procurement process; monitoring of construction work; monitoring of facility of drinking water; and monitoring of facility of separate toilets for girls and boys.

4.3.2 Issues and Challenges

SMCs can become a powerful tool as an institution for school accountability, but training of SMC members is often not adequate nor does it cover issues that can effectively augment school

and teacher accountability measures. The focus is usually on financial management of school grants, which incentivizes the SMCs to focus primarily on school infrastructure upkeep.

The delay in the release of funds continues to be a factor impacting timely training of SMC members, which in turn negatively affects their capacity to effectively implement SMC activities.

4.3.3 Recommendations

1) SMC rules may be modified to provide them more powers to monitor teacher presence and attendance.

2) Since the MHRD proposes to have learning indicators disclosed at the school level for community audit of learning outcomes, as well as data to be collected by *ASMITA*, SMCs may be equipped to handle this responsibility effectively and to use the *ASMITA* data for school-level planning and decision-making purposes. MHRD may prepare before the next JRM commences, a model national SMC training package that should include issues around teacher accountability; monitoring learning outcomes and handling data for school management.

3) MHRD may initiate states into the concept of a federation of SMCs and organize periodical meetings/conferences to enable SMC members to share experiences and identify best practices that could be widely diffused. MHRD may organize a first such event before the next JRM as a pilot initiative to test the waters.

4.4 Planning, Supervision and Governance

4.4.1 Major Achievements and Developments

The Ministry has recently adopted a seven-year strategy that includes two important pillars – achieving inclusive and effective partnerships with all stakeholders, and improving programme delivery through systemic reform and institution building. In order to give effect to this strategy, a number of information technology based initiatives and steps have been taken to streamline the process itself, from categorizing various items to standardizing the appraisal of Annual Work Plans and Budgets. In order to facilitate and enable the execution and timely planning and implementation of directions, an online system called *ASMITA*has been designed tocreate a master database on all schools, teachers and students,create applications which can be used on this master database, and link all data to the `Geographic Information System(GIS) mapping of schools and create a single report card for each school.

Given that such a large data base is being put in place, the JRM is of the view that in the interest of better coordination and avoiding data duplication, the U-DISE may be subsumed within *ASMITA*. Implementation of *ASMITA*seeks to resolve some of the problems currently experienced with U-DISE, while building on its success in standardizing data collection and reporting. Accompanying this proposal is a detailed questionnaire, which the JRM team assumes will form the basis of the data architecture of *ASMITA*. This questionnaire appears to simplify the requirements from schools in submitting data. With some further refinement, implementation of *ASMITA*could contribute significantly to enhancing data collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

At State level also, several initiatives have been taken up to clean up existing data in order to make it more robust. One such exercise in Andhra Pradesh led to the cleaning of enrolment data for nearly 3 lakh children in government and private schools. Likewise, Haryana has completed an Aadhar-based collection of data for children and teachers, which has helped the State to monitor attendance and regularity in schools.

4.4.2 Issues and Challenges

Community participation: SSA began as a programme based on micro-planning and decentralized decision-making, with the habitation as its base, with community ownership of local schools, involving SMCs and NGOs in planning. Over time, this process appears to have acquired a more centralized character, with district, and subsequently State offices and MHRD having a far greater say in the plan (AWP&B) that is finally put together for appraisal and approval by the Project Approval Board (PAB). At the Central level, steps have been taken to streamline the process further, with 38 distinct interventions being categorized into three major groups, and uniformity being brought about in the formatting of PAB minutes, etc. SSA has always been a norm-based programme, with funding approved against fixed yardsticks. It is to be hoped that this further categorization does not lead to reduced suppleness in planning, for, while standardization of systems is welcome, such systems should be sufficiently flexible to address dynamic situations, rather than straitjacketing the process.

Need for capacity building on planning and management: Given the importance of the planning and appraisal process at all levels, the question of continuous capacity building at these stages is of great significance, particularly in light of ongoing attrition and changes among personnel. This holds true for the national institutions as well, which are responsible for supporting States in planning and appraisal. Additionally, the nature of the Technical Support Group (TSG) of the Ministry itself has changed over the years, which may call for a review to determine if it continues to play its originally envisaged overarching advisory role, and whether some capacity augmentation is required.

Data collection: Although implementation of *ASMITA*is welcomed, there are some issues worth noting:

1) There is no evidence in the documentation supplied about what key strategic decisions all of the data being collected is intended to inform and thus how it will drive effective monitoring and evaluation. It also remains a concern that SSA currently has so many components that require tracking. Given this, some prioritization of policy priorities at the central level becomes essential during the programme mid-term review.
2) While the proposed ASMITA changes to the data gathering design requirements are justified, frequent changes to data structures of a nation-wide monitoring system are very costly and make historical comparison and trend analysis difficult. Thus, it is essential that *ASMITA*'s data structure, when finalized, is 'locked down' for long enough to enable all schools and States to re-design their record-keeping and management information systems to meet the needs of *ASMITA*and the SSA monitoring and evaluation system. If this is not done, its usefulness as a monitoring tool will be undermined.

Capacity building on data handling: The Mission was gratified to note the numerous data-related initiatives under consideration, some at the instance of the highest political levels in the country,

to capture and use information of various types. However it may be recalled that the quality of data is only as good as the use made of it, and therefore it would appear that there is also a simultaneous need for a clear framework for capacity building and enhancement in the analysis and use of such data at different levels.

State planning: We reiterate the recommendation of the previous JRM in regard to perspective plans and suggest that States be advised to prepare three-year plans so as to have a sense of continuity and a longer-term vision. These plans would enable States to put in place measures to achieve long term goals rather than annual programme objectives that may or may not be linked to those taken up in subsequent years. This sense of continuity would also be helpful in the case of fluctuations in personnel, by enabling the State to continue on an identified path irrespective of individual changes.

4.4.3 Recommendations

1) Define more tightly the priority issues that require monitoring as part of SSA through *ASMITA* (which will subsume the current U-DISE facility) with a clear roadmap and framework for enabling systematic analysis and use of data collected through *ASMITA*at various levels. Efforts may be made to ensure that U-DISE is successfully subsumed into *ASMITA*.

2) MHRD mayprepare a suitable training plan (before the next JRM) to cover aspects like micro-planning, data analysis and use, plan preparation, appraisal, etc, for various levels including policy makers from MHRD downwards, including the State Implementation Society, district officials, BRCs and CRCs, and the national institutions like NCERT, NUEPA, and NCTE. The plan should include an orientation of policy makers at all these levels to the SSA Framework itself.

3) Undertake a third party evaluation of the role of TSG and the nature of its support to the Ministry and the States, so as to keep it relevant to programme implementation with appropriate strengthening and capacity building.

5 Financial Management

5.1.1 Achievements

JRM observers scaled up initiatives by the GOI finance team in addressing the persistent financial issues under the program. Extensive review meetings were conducted with the states, reflecting positive initiatives both at central and State level. However, considering the multiplicity of spending/executing agencies (States, districts and sub-district levels) and diverse capacities across these agencies, there is persistent need for continuous efforts.

5.1.2 Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B), Releases, Fund Flow and Expenditure

Relationship between AWP&B, Releases and Actual Expenditure: For the year 2015-16, out of the approved AWP&B of Rs. 63,413 crore, total funds to the extent of Rs.47,531 crore (75% of AWP&B) were made available towards program expenditure, with the states reporting actual expenditures of Rs. 44,227 crore (70% of AWP&B). The gap between AWP&B and actual releases may lead to the risk of re-prioritization of program activities at state level to respond to the funding gap thereby superseding the PAB approval to that limited extent.

Flow of Funds: We have now two years of experience in the changed system in devolution of financial resources through the state treasury rather than to the State Implementation Society (SIS). Certain issues have been raised which need to be addressed in budgeting and financial planning. It is no longer a direct devolution from centre/states to the agencies. The JRM was informed that the State Implementing societies have expressed their concern regarding delayed release of funds due to the system change. Considerable time was passed for transfer of fund from the treasuries to the account of the implementing societies.

Uniformity of periodicity of expenditure: The tendency at the state level towards bunching of expenditure towards the end of this financial year needs to be avoided as it not only affects the implementation of the programs but may also leads to parking of funds by way of advances. In FY 2014-15, 6% of the total expenditure was incurred in first quarter against 48% in the fourth quarter of the financial year.

5.1.3 Effectiveness of Accounting and Internal Control Arrangements

Uniform Accounting Policies and Internal Controls: The FM&P manual clearly lays the policies, principles and procedures to be followed under the programme, however external audit/ independent review reports continue to highlight substantial variations on state to state and district to district basis. Further, adoption of improper/ hybrid accounting standards vitiates the financial reporting process, impacting policy decisions.

Precision of Financial Data: The external auditor's reports for FY 2014-15 have raised observations concerning the accuracy of reported expenditure, the possible impact of which on Assets, Liabilities, Income and Expenditure has not been fully ascertained. Some of the key observations are as under: (i) Releases/ advances accounted as expenditure; (ii) Teacher Salary payment to another government department only on the basis of approved work plan and sanctioned posts while receiving only Utilization Certificate (UC) for expenditure settlement (considering that Teachers' Salary comprises almost 70% of the expenditures under SSA, it still remains out of the gambit of various independent financial reviews under the program); (iii) Absence of primary documents to verify progress of civil works (e.g., third party verification, measurement books, stock register etc); (iv) Expenses booked without getting a utilization certificate; (v) Presence of unidentified credit balances/ suspense account balances; (vi) Deficiencies in bank reconciliation activity / Multiple Bank accounts at district/ sub-district level/ cash payments, etc; (vii) Absence of subsidiary records for expenditure verification; (viii) Insufficient monitoring of funds spent at schools and sub-district level; and (ix) Non-accounting of interest earned and refunds from implementing agencies accounted for as incomes.

Outstanding Advances*:* Information on advances outstanding as on 31 March 2016 in 25 states for the period till 31 March 2015 shared with the JRM reflects that total outstanding advances for these states were Rs. 2867.68 crores, of which Rs. 1006.27 crores were for the period until 31 March 2013-14 (35% of total). It may be noted that detailed age-wise analysis of advances up to 2013-14 is not available in the system. This is a risk element in cash management system.

Finance and Accounts Staffing: The FM staffing in the state is functioning at approximately 64% of the sanctioned strength. There is a probable risk of vacant posts being managed by internal arrangements of giving additional charges to the existing staff, which may have led to technically enabled resources (teaching cadre personnel) being engaged in administrative and accounting functions, thereby leading to in-appropriate utilization of already scarce resources.

5.1.4 Effectiveness of Auditing and Assurance Mechanisms

Status of audit compliance: As of July 2016, there are about 240 audit reports pending from FY-2005-06 onwards, some of which are partly settled and others are awaiting reply from the SISs. Further, every year, another 36 audit reports are added but the pace of settlement is very slow, which is not only resulting in a heavy backlog but is also weakening effectiveness of financial management controls.

Quality of External Audit: Audit opinion is an important tool being relied upon by the stakeholders in understanding the prevailing financial environment. On review of the reports for FY 2014-15, it is observed that there continues to be ambiguous statements without appropriate quantification of impacts on the financials as well as for a number of State Reports the opinion type expressed by the auditors is not clear in terms of Un-Qualified/ Qualified/ Adverse or Disclaimer of opinion.

Internal Audit: As of July 2016, internal audit for all quarters of FY 2015-16 for all levels stands completed for only 5 states/UTs. The mission is concerned to note that Internal Audit for FY 2015-16 had not commenced in case of 8 states: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Daman & Diu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Odisha and Rajasthan.

5.1.5 Recommendations

It must be borne in mind that SSA is entering its third phase of operation with 31 components of activity involving extensive data mining including financial area. Strengthening of financial management system is the call of the day.

1) *Focused Assessment & Improvement*: After each JRM review, 3-5 States should be identified (spending basis) which are given focused attention for strengthening by (i) understanding the persisting challenges (ii) developing a detailed Financial Management Improvement Plan (FMIP) and (iii) implementing FMIP across the State with identifiable achievement outputs.

2) *Budget and Fund Flow*: Budget and fund flow should be appropriately projected to capture the trail of treasury mode devolution of funds. Some steps that may facilitate timely fund flows include: (i) communication of the indicative program budgets to states, so that these can be reflected in the respective state budgets appropriately; (ii) active engagement of SIS in complying and following-up with the various State procedural requirements involved in

release of funds from respective treasuries; and (iii) proactive planning at the SIS end to enable speedy usage/transfers of funds, once the same are received in their Bank accounts.

3) *Accrual system of accounting*: Dedicated time-bound action is required to ensure that accrual system of accounting is adopted by all accounting units from the primary to the SIS level. This is of key importance if income/expenditures, assets/ liabilities and fund availability for the program is to be correctly reflected.

4) *Effective Capacity Building:* a three-tier capacity building initiative is suggested for: (i) the GOI FM team and State Finance Controllers; (ii) State/ district/ sub-district accounting staff; and (iii) SMCs. An annual training plan for each tier should be prepared separately after giving due consideration to their respective roles and responsibilities. In addition, in light of high turnover of FM staff, the mission suggests rolling-out a standard training/ E-training module for State and district level FM staff, with flexibility to States for customization where required.

5) *Uniformity of Periodicity of Expenditure*: to ensure that expenditure is evenly spread and no activity is neglected, a district-wise and activity-wise 'Annual Expenditure Plan' indicating physical targets along with monthly requirement of funds in respect of each activity may be prepared and implemented by each SIS. A template may also be devised in this regard.

6) *Staffing*: MHRD should discuss with individual States a time-bound plan for filling vacancies in accounts and finance staff with professionally competent personnel.

7) *Teachers' salaries*: the mission suggests that the salary disbursing department be requested to share the Audit Report covering the audit of the teacher's salary. Otherwise, along with the UC, payment folio issued by the bank (with whom teacher's salary accounts are being maintained) may be requested, which can subsequently be reviewed at the time of annual audit.

8) *Compliance of Audit Observations*: In light of continuing backlogs, for impactful results compliance may be handled by following Tier approach: (i) Current Year (FY 2014-15); (ii) 1-5 previous years (FY 2009-14), and (iii) prior period, with detailed action oriented focus to Tier-1. It is further suggested the States may establish a formal audit compliance mechanism such as an Audit Committee in States which may meet bi-annually/ annually.

9) *Internal Audit*: All SISs should implement a system of timely Quarterly Internal Audit and State office to monitor quality of audit reports. Internal Audit Report should be mandatorily shared with the statutory auditor, with key observations also put before quarterly Financial Controller meetings.

10) *Workshop with Statutory Auditors*: Conduct a workshop with statutory auditors (signing partners of audit firms) before conclusion of audit for FY 2015-16 to discuss issues pertaining to audit quality observed in previous years and clarify expectations based on the Terms of Reference of audit.

6 Procurement

6.1 Procurement Plan

Procurement Plans of all the States have been uploaded for the year 2015-16. However Procurement Plans for the year 2016-17 are due to be uploaded. In case these States have no procurements to be done during the year, they should inform MHRD in writing.

The FMP manual stipulates that the Plans have to be uploaded on respective SIS websites within one month of approval of the PAB minutes. The Plans should be uploaded by October every year at the latest. Delays in preparation and hosting of procurement plans have been reported in previous JRM reports too.

Procurement plans are an important tool to ensure that program implementation happens in a timely manner. Publishing the procurement plan will help improve participation in tenders as it acts as an early intimation to the market about possible opportunities.

6.2 Post Procurement Review:

Post procurement Review have been conducted for the seven states i.e. Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat; on the sample basis. Key observations / comments are as follows:

- Procurement Process in some cases are not in accordance with the provisions in the FM&P Manual of SSA.
- Contract value are often not within the thresholds of respective procurement methods in accordance with the provisions in the Financing Agreement; for example, the textbooks procurement estimated to cost equivalent or more than $2,000,000 per contract, shall not be procured using the proceeds of this credit; as prescribed in the Financing Agreement.
- Multiple packages are prepared through Limited tender method instead of single open tender method for similar nature of the work.
- Selection of appropriate procurement method in some cases is not line with the provision of the FM&P Manual.
- Bid preparation period (minimum 30 days) in some cases is not provided for procurement through NCB / Open tender method.
- The indication of requirement of a performance security should be mentioned in the bid document and obtain the same within the stipulated period as mentioned in the Work Order / Contract.
- As per FM&P Manual of SSA III and rules laid down by the MoHRD,Limited Tender procedure may be adopted for procurement of school uniforms at SMC level; it is also advised to ensure that, for procurement through DGS&D Rate Contract (RC), it is necessary to issue the PO/Contract within the validity period of the DGS&D RC. Also, rates of the item in the PO issued to the bidder must match with the rates as per the DGS&D RC.

- It is advised to prepare and sign a formal Contract Agreement with the successful bidder and such contract should be signed promptly after issue of PO / Letter of Acceptance and subsequent receipt of the performance security; Rational delivery/ completion period must be stipulated in the PO/ Contract and regular follow-up with the bidder must be done so as to avoid delay in supply / completion.

- Items procured must be immediately put in use for the intended purpose to avail warranty benefits without incurring additional costs.

- It is advised to maintain records at State at the office where the procurement is done.

- As per FM&P Manual of SSA, single tender system without competition shall be an appropriate method under the following circumstances:

  – Extension of existing contracts for goods awarded with the prescribed procedures, justifiable on economic grounds; (ii) Standardization of equipment or spare parts to be compatible with existing equipment may justify additional purchases from the original supplier; (iii) The required item is proprietary and obtainable only from one source; (iv) Need for early delivery to avoid costly delays, and (v) In exceptional cases, such as in response to natural disasters.

6.3 Recommendations:

1) MHRD should reiterate to the States that preparation and uploading of procurement plans within the stipulated time frames is mandatory.

2) The FM&P Manual may be updated in line with the agreed procurement thresholds.

3) Training of relevant staff may be undertaken on procurement procedures/process and requirement in accordance with the provisions in the FM&P Manual of SSA III.

4) MHRD may rollout a standard training module with flexibility to states for customization where required.

5) At sub-district level, specifically Headmasters and SMC members may be provided regular training on record keeping, accounting and SDP preparation along with constant on-the job hand holding support by way of visits and discussion with the DPO and BRC.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Introduction

1.1 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship programme of the Government of India, implemented in partnership with State Governments for universalisingelementary education (UEE) in India.SSA aims at providing relevant education to all children in the 6-14 years age group. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A has come into force with effect from 1st April 2010.SSA norms have been revised to correspond with the provisions of the RTE Act.

1.2 SSA is a national programme largely funded through national resources with limited external funding by Development Partners (DPs) –the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and European Commission (EC). The programme provides for intense monitoring mechanisms including provision for bi-annual Review Missions.

1.3 The Twenty ThirdJoint Review Mission (JRM) of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan,is scheduled to be held from 21stJuly to 28th July, 2016.The Mission would be led by Government of India.

2. Mission Objectives and guiding principles: -

2.1 The 23rd Joint Review Mission of SSA will also be a Mid Term Review (MTR) of the Bank's support to SSA and the movement towards achievement of the Project Development Objective which is ***to improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India***. The JRM will also review and track progress on implementation of the key recommendations of the 22nd JRM which was held from 2nd to 16th December 2016, with focused tracking of the Actions Taken Report of Ministry of Human Resource Development. The JRM will also involve review of the SSA Results Framework indicators.

2.2 The guiding principle is one of a Learning Mission: (a) learning of progress made against existing SSA Results Framework (b) cross sharing of experiences that highlight strengths and weaknesses with a view to strengthening quality of elementary education.

The Mission's focus area would be onqualityimprovement under SSA with special reference to

- **Strengthening early learning.**
- **Assessing the quality of subject-based teaching and assessment strategies at the upper primary level,**
- **Supporting robust teacher training systems**
- **Assessing modalities for strengthening national and state level learning assessment systems**

- **Reviewingsocial audit mechanisms under SSA and the role of School Management Committees.**

2.3 **The Mission will:**

- conduct desk-based mid-termreview, carry out discussions and deliberations in Delhito track progress and action taken by MHRD.
- The Twenty Third Joint Review Mission for SSA will be a desk review and will provide an overall report in the form of an Aide Memoire.

2.4 During the mid-term review, the Mission would enquire, in detail, into the following aspects:

I. <u>Access</u>

- Review the indicators on Results Framework pertaining to access & equity.

II. <u>Financial Management</u>

- Progress against sanctioned annual work plans;
- Review of expenditure and flow of funds, status of audit reports due & audit compliance of previous reports and procurement issues.

IV. <u>Focus Theme: Quality</u>

- Review the indicators on Results Framework pertaining to addressing Quality.
- Review of existing indicators, progress and recommendations of the International Conference to develop key action points on improving the quality of Elementary Education.

3. Documents and information required for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan –Joint Review Mission

(i) Information on release of funds to states – 2016-17.
(ii) FMRs (March, 2016). (Unaudited)
(iii) Status of Audit Reports of 2014-15 and compliance of audit observations state-wise for 2013-14.
(iv) Action Taken on Recommendations of the Twenty SecondJoint Review Mission of SSA.
(v) Copies of research studies completed (if any).
(vi) Progress against Results Framework Indicators

Government of India will make available the above documents sevendays prior to the JRM.

4. Mission Plan

4.1 The Mission would comprise **14 Members–**including**3**specialist members on financial management and procurement. Members would be chosen in such a way that expertise would be available for all the major functional areas. **The Mission would review, discuss and deliberate in Delhi.**

Considering that the Mission is an MTR of the World Bank's support to SSA, the World Bank team will comprise of 7 professionals including two fiduciary specialists. The GoI team will have 7 members including one financial specialist.

4.2 **The organization of meetings and deliberations for the JRM will be the responsibility of the World Bank.**

5. TIME FRAME

The Twenty Third Joint Review Mission would take place during 21st July to 28th July, 2016 with briefing by Government of India and National Resource Organizations on 21st July and Wrap Up meeting on 28th July. The detailed Programme Schedule would be intimated shortly.

Annex2: SSA Results Framework

23rd Joint Review Mission

21st – 28th July 2016

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
1.	Increase in the student attendance rate	12 States/UTs reported student attendance ≥80% at primary and 15 states/UTs reported student attendance ≥80% at upper primary (Draft independent Study-2014 with data of 2012-13)	Independent study 2014 on teacher and student attendance published on SSA website	13 States / UTs reported student attendance≥80 % at primary level. 16 States /UTs reported student attendance≥80 % at upper primary level.		Independent study 2014 on teacher and student attendance uploaded on SSA website Students' attendance 76.1% at Primary level and 77.9% at Upper primary level. Kerala showed 96.2% attendance at primary level and 96.6% at upper primary level. Tamil Nadu showed more than 90% attendance at primary and upper primary level.	Independent Studies	Independent Sampling Studies	Independent Agencies/ GOI
2.	Increase in the retention rateat primary level	Retention rate at primary level is 80%	Increase in retention rate to 81%	Retention rate at primary level is 82.4%	Increase retention rate to 82%	83.74%	Annual	UDISE	NUEPA

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
		UDISE 2012-13		UDISE 2013-14					
3.	Increase inthe transition rate from primary to upper primary	Transition rate from primary to upper primary is 86.7% UDISE 2012-13	Improvement in transition rates to 87.5%	Transition rate from primary to upper primary is 89.6% UDISE 2013-14	Improvement in transition rates to 88%	89.74%	Annual	Collected from each school	NUEPA
4.	Learning levels adequately and regularly monitored	NAS Grade 5 (2011-12) report available (cycle 3). NAS rounds of grades 3 and 8 in process of implementation (cycle 3)	NAS grades 3 and 8 reports available (cycle 3) NAS grade 5 data collected (cycle 4)	NAS grades 3 and 8 reports available (cycle 3) NAS grade 5 data collected (cycle 4)	NAS grade 5 report available (cycle 4) NAS grade 3 data collected (cycle 4)	Yes (Shared by NCERT in JRM) Being Collected	NAS Report of grades 3, 5 and 8 every three years	Sample basis from schools	NCERT
Intermediate outcome indicators									
Component 1: Improving quality for enhancing learning									
1.	Specific early grades quality programmes implemented to strengthen	No early grade learning program implemented in states that is ready for	6 states begun implementation of early grade learning	18 states rolled out early grades learning programme.	Specific early grades quality programmes for language and numeracy	18 states rolled out early grades learning programme. All states have	Annual PMIS Reports disaggregated by State	Programme MIS	States

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
	foundation in language and numeracy	evaluation Baseline not available	program	All states have received funding for early grades learning programmes in 2014-15	being run in at least 10 States/UTs.	received funding for early grades learning programmes in 2014-15			
2.	System of state level achievement surveys(SLAS) established	Standard Operating Procedures developed by MHRD for conducting SLAS	5 states/UTs conducted SLAS	6 States completed the SLAS and shared the Report	10 States/UTs conducted SLAS	25 States conducted SLAS for different classes in 2014-15 (Andhra, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Talanagana, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.	Annual	Program MIS	States

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
3.	More government school teachers trained through improved in-service training	50% teachers receive in-service training during previous academic year PMIS 2012-13. (yearly percentages expected to be lower due to significant increase in number of teachers recruited andincrease in training days	40% teachers received in-service training	Government school teachers trained through improved in-service training for BRC level is 78%and CRC level achievement is 72% (March 2014)	40% teachers received in service training	Government school teachers trained through improved in-service training for BRC level is 73%and CRC level achievement is 80% (March 2015)	Annual PMIS Reports	Programme MIS	States
4.	Increased teacher attendance	Teacher attendance level is 81.7% at primary level and 80.5% at upper primary level Independent study, 2010 (data of 2006-07)	Teacher attendance is 84.3% at primary and 81.3% at upper primary Draft independent study 2014 (data of 2012-13)	Teacher attendance is 84.8% at primary level. Teacher attendance is 83.1%at upper primary level.		Independent study 2014 on teacher and student attendance uploaded on SSA website Teachers attendance 84.8% at Primary level and 83.1 % at Upper primary level West Bengal showed more than 90% attendance at primary and upper primary level	Independent studies	Sampling Studies	States Independent agencies/GOI
5.	Increased training of head masters	Head master training has been sporadically and irregularly	10% of head masters trained since	60% target achieved by 2013-14	20% of head masters trained since	55% target achieved in 2014-15 against PAB	Programme MIS	PMIS	States

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
		conducted in a few states	2012-13	against PAB physical target of 312284 HMs	2012-13 (cumulative)	physical target of 3200 HMs under School Leadership			
6.	Increased training of educational administrators	Training for educational administrators from state to block level conducted sporadically	10% of educational administrators from State to Block level received training since 2012-13	Nil (No PAB approval for the year)	15% of educational administrators from State to Block level received training since 2012-13 (cumulative)	Nil (No PAB approval for the year)	Quarterly	PMIS	States
Component 2: Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation									
1.	CRC and BRC academic support and supervision	50% vacancies in BRCs on average PAB 2013-14	55% positions filled in BRCs and CRCs	71% positions filled in BRCs and CRCs	60% positions filled in BRCs and CRCs on average.	72% positions filled in BRCs and CRCs	Annual PMIS Reports	Programme MIS	States
2.	Improved community management of schools	>80% of SMCs constituted in most states. Training of SMCs conducted in some states.	80% of constituted SMCs bodies reporting role in school supervision	80% of constituted SMCs bodies reporting role in school supervision	80% of constituted SMCs reporting role in school supervision	Yes, 80% of constituted SMCs reporting role in school supervision	PMIS Quarterly progress reports Independent	PMIS Independent Sample Studies	States and Districts Independent agencies/GOI

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
							Studies		
3.	Development and use of school performance standards *	Capacity building done fordevelopment of school performance standards	National and international partnerships established for developing school performance standards	NIL	School performance standards developed at the national level	Done. 'Shala Siddhi' has been launched by the Department. Presentation made before the JRM. *	Annual Report by NUEPA	NUEPA	NUEPA
4.	Improved utilization of funds by states	3 states/UTs incur expenditure of 80% of received funds. MHRD financial statement for 2013-14	5 of states/UTs incur expenditure of 80% of received funds.	21 States/UTs incurred expenditure more than 80% of **available** funds.	7 of States/UTs incur expenditure of 80% of received funds.	24 states have incurred expenditure of 80% of available funds. The States are: Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, D&N Haveli, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Lakshdweep, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura,	IUFRsand FRMs	State-wise expenditure status of GOI and audit reports	States & GOI

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
						Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand			
Component 3: Improving equitable access and retention									
1.	Increase in the number of children enrolled at upper primary level in schools	134 mil lion at primary and 64.9 million at upper primary level (total) UDISE 2012-13	Enrolment of children at upper primary level increased to 65.5 million	132 Million at Primary and 66.4 Million at upper primary level (Total) UDISE 2013-14	Enrolment of children at upper primacy level increased to 66 million	130 million at primary and 67.16 million at upper primary level (total) *UDISE 2014-15 (Provisional)*	Annual	UDISE	NUEPA
2.	Increase in separate toilets for girls in government schools	72.16% schools with separate toilets for girls UDISE 2011-12	Share of schools with separate toilet facility for girls increased to72.5%	84.63% schools with separate toilets for girls UDISE 2013-14	Share of schools with separate toilet facility for girls increased to 73%	87.08% *UDISE 2014-15 (Provisional* Under Swachh Vidyalaya Programme the remaining govt. schools has been provided separate toilets for boys and girls. As on 15th August, 2015, 100% government schools have a separate boys and girls toilet.	Annual	UDISE	NUEPA
3.	Increased	Enrolment share	Enrolment	Enrolment	Enrolment	Enrolment share	Annual	UDISE	NUEPA

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
	enrolment share of girls, ST, ST , Muslim children vis-a-vis relevant age group share in populationat elementary stage; and increased enrolment %out of identified CWSN at elementary level	girls: 48.63% Girls' share in population: 48% Enrolment share of SC:20.24% SC share in Population:16.6% Enrolment share of ST:10.85% ST share in population:8.6% Enrolment share of Muslims:13.5% Muslim share in population:13.4% UDISE 2012-13 (Census 2011 for girls, SC & ST: Census 2001 for Muslims)	share of girls, SC, ST, and Muslim childrenat upper primary level reflect their relevant age group share in population	share girls: 48.35% Girls' share in population: 48% Enrolment share of SC:19.72%, SC share in Population:16.6% Enrolment share of ST:10.63%, ST share in population:8.6% Enrolment share of Muslims:13.73% Muslim share in population:13.43% UDISE - 2013-14	share of girls, SC, ST and Muslim children at upper primary level reflect their relevant age group share in population	girls: 48.3% Girls' share in population: 47.8% Enrolment share of SC:19.80% SC share in Population:16.6% Enrolment share of ST:10.47% ST share in population:8.6% Enrolment share of Muslims:13.77% Muslim share in population:14.2% *(Census 2011 for girls, SC/ST & Muslim)* *UDISE 2014-15 (Provisional)*			

S. No.	Outcome Indicators	Baseline	2013-14 Target	2013-14 Achievement	2014-15 Target	2014-15 Achievement	Frequency and Report	Data Collection Instruments	Responsibility for Data Collection
PDO: To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India									
PDO Indicators									
				(Census 2011 for girls, SC & ST: Census 2001 for Muslims)					
		Enrolment of CWSN is 2.1m out of2.7m identified (77% enrolled out of identified CWSN) UDISE 2012-13	80% of identified CWSN enrolled in school and education programs	Enrolment of CWSN is 2.3 m out of2.7 m identified (86% enrolled out of identified CWSN) UDISE 2012-13	80% of identified CWSN enrolled in school and education programs	89.5% of identified CWSN enrolled in school and education programs	Annual	UDISE	NUEPA

*** Status of National Programme of School Standard and Evaluation as on July 2016**

1) School Standard and Evaluation is one of the – "Expected Out comes" included in the PAB minutes of 2016-17.

2) In AWP&B of SSA for 2016-17 – the PAB approved funds @ Rs 10/- Per child enrolled in Government & Government Aided schools for implementation of school standard / evaluation.

3) Total Funds sanctioned for all the States and UTs amount to Rs. 112.40 Cr. Also an amount of Rs. 4.03 Cr. was sanctioned to NUEPA for this purpose.

4) Different States like M.P and Maharashtra etc have initiated the implementation of this component in the context of their own experience during the last few years.

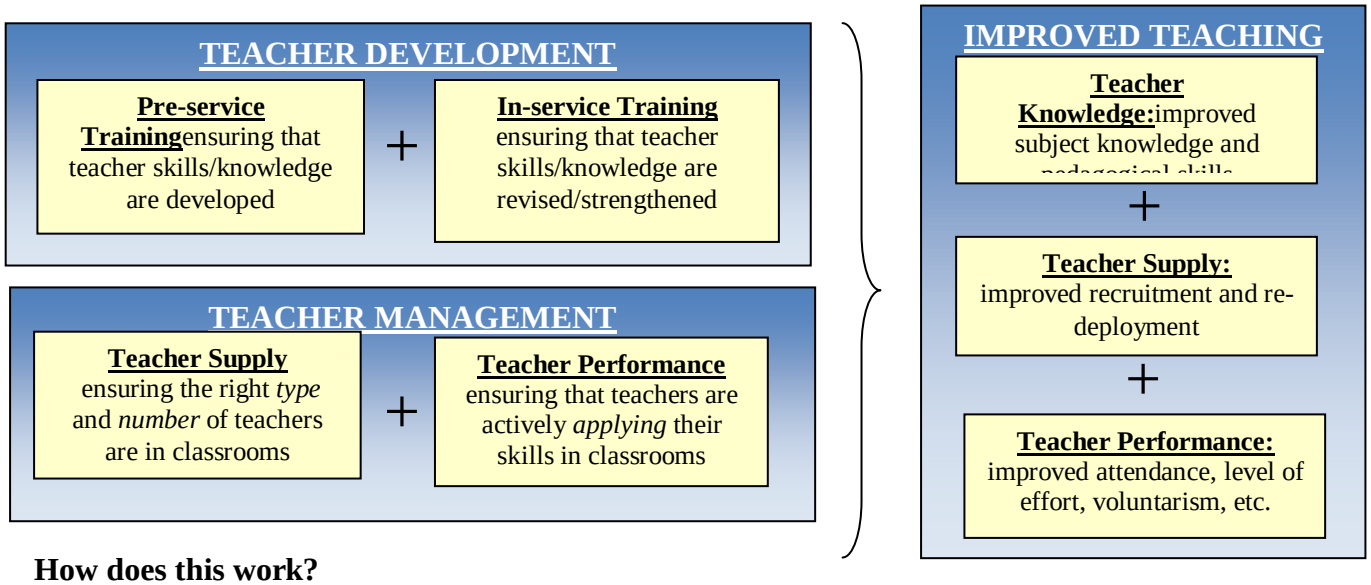
Annex 3: Characteristics of an effective teacher development system

Teacher Development broadly encompasses pre- and in-service training. Teacher Management entails issues of:

- Teacher Supply - ensuring the right type and number of teachers are *available* to apply their skills.
- Teacher Performance - ensuring that these available teachers are actively *applying* their skills.

The following diagram illustrates these components and how Teacher Management initiatives need to work in tandem with Teacher Development activities in order to more effectively improve teaching and learning:

Teacher management conceptual framework



How does this work?

Teachersupplyandrecruitmentisconcernedwithensuringthattherightnumberofteachersisavailabl eattherighttimesinallschools,andthattheyhavethenecessaryknowledgeandskillstoteacheffective ly.
Teacherdeploymentfocusesonimprovingthewayinwhichstateanddistrictadministratorsdeployav ailableteacherstomeetlocalneeds.Teachertrainers'effortsarefocusedonensuringthatteachersare wellpreparedtobegintheircareersandthatexistingteachersaresupportedindevelopingtheirskillsso theycanconsistentlydelivergoodqualitylessons.This focusinvolvesTeacherPerformanceAppraisal(TPA)andopportunitiesforContinuingProfessional Development(CPD).

Annex 4: Presence of Pre-Primary Sections (PPS) in Government Schools and Co-located Anganwadis (U-DISE 2015-16)

State/UTs	Percentage of Government Schools with Pre-Primary Sections (PPS)	Percentage of Government Schools with Anganwadi
A & N Islands	90.27	35.88
Andhra Pradesh	0.01	20.07
Arunachal Pradesh	20.63	9.99
Assam	77.65	37.42
Bihar	1.75	39.96
Chandigarh	85.71	7.83
Chhattisgarh	1.57	28.63
D & N Haveli	1.27	55.27
Daman & Diu	20.75	19.15
Delhi	54.11	0.00
Goa	7.54	27.31
Gujarat	2.8	15.38
Haryana	48.99	25.61
Himachal Pradesh	2.15	25.26
Jammu & Kashmir	53.24	11.30
Jharkhand	1.97	10.98
Karnataka	4.35	57.43
Kerala	67.81	21.34
Lakshadweep	0	0.00
Madhya Pradesh	4.02	32.00
Maharashtra	3.18	71.63
Manipur	15.84	24.70
Meghalaya	81.14	13.01
Mizoram	29.98	7.45
Nagaland	96.16	7.89
Odisha	5.21	32.76
Puducherry	97.91	13.30
Punjab	1.14	49.87
Rajasthan	1.44	25.12
Sikkim	70.35	17.36
Tamil Nadu	1.13	64.70
Telangana	0.45	26.59
Tripura	1.46	13.93
Uttar Pradesh	7.36	47.10
Uttarakhand	2.17	50.35
West Bengal	97.14	26.71
All States	**19.43**	**36.30**

Annex 5: International Experience and Trends in National, Census-Based Assessment

Approaches to assessment in any education system are influenced by the economic, cultural, and social context. Nonetheless, there is sufficient international experience to suggest that regardless of context, certain challenges tend to accompany the introduction of an annual, census-based approach to national testing, although this has not prevented some countries, such as the US, from implementing the approach:

- Many countries have found themselves unable or unwilling to implement annual, census-based testing over time due to the stresses and distortions it places on their education system:
  - Annual, census-based testing costs far more to design, implement, analyse and report on than sample-based assessment. In addition, because the data are frequently used to hold key stakeholders (such as teachers) accountable, there are political costs as well as a risk of distorted teaching practices that can produce increased test scores without real improvements in learning. This can create a degree of stress on an education system that is not sustainable – financially, politically, educationally, or otherwise – over time. For example, **England** introduced census-based national testing at three key stages of its compulsory schooling almost two decades ago. However, the strain placed on the system very quickly led to teacher strikes, parental protests, and the abandonment of census testing at two of the stages: ages 7 and 14. Currently, there is only census-based testing of 11 year olds, which means testing fewer than one million students in no more than three subject areas annually. At the same time, the **United States** has used a census-based approach to testing at the state level (Grades 3-8 and once in high school) since 2001. This is made possible through several factors, including being tied to federal funding for states; relying heavily on computer-based test design and administration and multiple-choice items; focusing primarily on two subject areas; providing flexibility for states to design their own tests; and allowing students to opt out of the testing entirely if they or their parents wish.
- In addition, many countries gravitate towards other assessment options because they add more value to their education quality improvements efforts or are more sustainable, including:
  - Teacher-led assessments of students at key grades: In **England**, the annual, census-based test at age 7 was replaced with teacher-led assessments of student learning outcomes. This shifted the process closer to the classroom level.
  - Census testing with an embedded, quality-controlled sample for national reporting and use: **Colombia** has successfully used this approach. It combines the need for benchmarked information on individual students' learning levels at the local level with a low-stakes approach to reporting and use at the national level. The model has proven both fiscally sustainable and acceptable to teachers.
  - Computer-based/adaptive testing built on networked item banks and national/state standards: **New Zealand, Oregon,** and the **Republic of Georgia** all use computer-based test administration, analysis, and reporting with elements of adaptive testing to increase the cost effectiveness, efficiency, technical quality, and instructional utility of the information derived from individual student testing.

- Regular (not annual) sample-based national assessment: This is the preferred approach of most education systems around the world. It allows time for the development of quality test items; in-depth data analysis and reporting; and the ability to use test results to both inform and track the effects of new approaches to policy, curriculum, textbooks, and teacher training.

- Participation in international or regional assessment: Most education systems now participate in one or more international or regional benchmarking assessments on a regular basis. They do this in addition to, or instead of, national assessment because the data provide additional insights on learning that cannot be obtained through a national exercise, even one that is census-based. All BRIC countries (**Brazil, Russia, China**) except India now participate to some degree in international or regional benchmarking.

- The new Sustainable Development Goal for education will further shape how countries approach national, large-scale assessment of student learning levels.

  - The new United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education (Goal 4) aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. A key target under this goal is to ensure that, by 2030, all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. "Relevant and effective learning" will be measured by tracking the percentage of children in each country that achieve – at the very least – "minimum proficiency" on standardized math and reading tests administered in Grade 2 or 3, at the end of primary, and at the end of lower secondary. Many countries will choose to meet this reporting requirement by participating in international or regional assessments such as TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA, SACMEQ, PASEC, and LLECE, or by using data from their own national assessments. Regardless, the expectation is that sample-based data collection methods carried out every few years will suffice and that countries must be able to report their data against a defined "minimum proficiency" standard on the test, similar to the anchored performance levels that were recommended by the last JRM as a possible next step for the NAS program.