Education
Strategic plan
2008-2010

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Contents

This document articulates our understanding and strategy of intervention in relation to education. At the very outset I wish to congratulate the team lead by Damodaram Kuppuswami for painstakingly putting it together to make it available for a wider distribution.

The document is indeed written quite elaborately and comprehensively and knowing that the reader will find all the details sought for in the pages that follow, I will strictly confine myself to a much smaller task in the lines that follow.

As we all know ActionAid works in a niche area. We work with the excluded communities. It is children of the excluded who are denied education. India has a very large network of government run schools. Yet the overwhelming majority of these schools do not engage in effective teaching and as a result children are "pushed out" of schools even though very poor parents would like to see their children educated.

Despite years of scholarship on issues related to education, there is still considerable divergence on effective strategies to be used to achieve the goal of "universalisation of School education". A major reason for this reality to continue is certainly the lack of political will and the reason for this is the fact that India is divided into the India of the rich and the India of the poor. We have in this country a highly stratified system of education which coincides with the degree of stratification that exists in society itself.

We now have International schools, Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) schools, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools, Kendriya Vidyalaya schools and the more ordinary schools with state syllabus. Every household in India with some purchasing power or even more accurately speaking with the purchasing power to buy education can walk into one of these schools depending upon the money available with the parents. But what about those children whose parents are from the excluded communities?

It is therefore the Dalits, the Adivasis, the Muslims, the urban poor, the informal sector, the fisher folk, the weavers and similarly placed households from among the most backward communities who do not have the purchasing power- they do not even have money for their food requirements and much less do they have the capacity to pay fees for schooling their children.

Is the Government not aware of this reality? Indeed they are! Hence they have responded by enacting Art.21-A, as a brilliant populist measure. They however "forgot" to notify the amendment and hence this new article is not yet law, but thanks to the Supreme Court of India the law of the land already says that education is indeed a Fundamental Right.

Yet the operationalisation of a Fundamental Right to education in India requires many other requirements to fall in place. We need policy clarity, we need clarity as to the steps to be undertaken, We need to clarify what is the irreducible infra structure that a school needs, what is the minimum teacher: student ratio. What is the role of the community? What minimum training should a teacher possess and the like.

It is when we put together some of these nitty-gritties and make them happen in literally every village of India and there are nearly 700,000 of them, that we can answer the question- How to make the Government school function?

The purpose of the document that follows is in order to seek answers to some of these questions and we hope it does contribute in this direction.

Please read through the ensuing pages carefully and do give us the benefit of your feed back.

Babu Mathew
Country Director, ActionAid India

Early 1970s saw ActionAid (AA) sponsoring the education of children. In the late 1990s, it has adopted the rights based approach and its programme on education moved to the current thrust of demanding good quality education for all children. AA has in the past worked towards better education for children but with a different approach – infrastructure development, running non formal and adult education centres, teachers' training – largely in partnership with communities. Policy Advocacy continues to be integral to our work.

Every 5 years, ActionAid develops its Country Strategy Paper (CSP) based on a detailed review of programmes and feedback received from the communities we work with and the partners. The CSP II (1998-2002) initiated the rights based approach to our work with direct intervention for pre school children, school drop outs and adults. The Education Unit located in Patna provided support to micro projects and took up macro level research and advocacy work. *Taking Sides* (an up-dated strategy: 2000-04) shifted the focus to the most marginalised communities (special attention to women, children and persons with disability within them) that are invisible, stigmatised and discriminated to ensure them their rights enshrined in Constitutional and Legislative provisions. While education as a right was one of the issues that ActionAid decided to work on, the thrust was largely to ensure access to out of school children.

ActionAid India, through CSP III (2005-2010), has resolved to deepen its work using the rights based approach. Briefly, over the next five years, we would work with marginalised social groups towards realisation of their rights – health, education, shelter, food and livelihood and human security. We aim to form an alliance of the marginalised so they can demand for their rights in a collective voice.

In India, the time is ripe for achieving Universalisation of school education. Its positive side is that the parents of the poor desire that their children attend school despite grinding poverty. There is evidence that if the conditions for children to achieve quality education are created - they would desire to go that way. This is an encouraging trend. Yet over the years, quality in government school education has been neglected, if not ignored. The feeble voice of the excluded communities, who attend these schools, for good quality education is not heard. We seek to strengthen their voices. ActionAid will support the government where its efforts are sincere - while demanding accountability where there are lapses in implementation.

We present our Education Strategic Plan, which has been developed through a series of consultations with partners and others working in the education sector. We are thankful to Kate Carroll and Niraj Seth for their inputs for the writing of this strategic plan in the initial stages.

Damodaram Kuppuswami
On behalf of Education Working Group
ActionAid

Abbreviations

AA	:	ActionAid
AICTE	:	All India Council for Technical Education
AIDS	:	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AIE	:	Alternate Innovative Education
ASPBAE	:	Asia South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education
BRC	:	Block Resource Centre
CAC	:	Civic Amenities Committee
CBO	:	Community Based Organisation
CEF	:	Commonwealth Education Fund
CRC	:	Cluster Resource Centre
CSO	:	Civil Society Organisations
CSP	:	Country Strategy Paper
CSS	:	Common School System
DIET	:	District Institute for Educational Training
DISE	:	District Information System on Education
EFA	:	Education for All
EGS	:	Education Guarantee School
EU	:	European Union
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
GPs	:	Gram Panchayats
HIV	:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICDS	:	Integrated Child Development Scheme
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
MDG	:	Millennium Development Goals
MDM	:	Mid Day Meal
MTA	:	Mothers Teacher Association
MVF	:	M. Venkatarangaiya Foundation
NAFRE	:	National Alliance for Fundamental Right to Education
NCE	:	National Coalition on Education
NCF	:	National Curriculum Framework
NCPCR	:	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NFE	:	Non Formal Education
NGOs	:	Non Governmental Organisations
NPE	:	National Policy on Education
NREGA	:	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NSS	:	National Sample Survey
NUEPA	:	National University of Education Planning and Administration
OBB	:	Operation Blackboard
PLHA	:	People Living with HIV-AIDS
POA	:	Programme of Action
PRI	:	Panchayat Raj Institutions
PROBE	:	Public Report on Basic Education in India
PTA	:	Parents Teacher Association
RBA	:	Rights Based Approach
SC	:	Scheduled Caste
SDMC	:	School Development Management Committee
SSA	:	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	:	Scheduled Tribe
TLM	:	Teaching Learning Material
UEE	:	Universal Elementary Education
UN	:	United Nations
UPA	:	United Progressive Alliance
VEC	:	Village Education Committee

Executive Summary

ActionAid India sees education as a fundamental human right, the responsibility of the State and a central element of the development policy for ensuring social justice. This envisions creating a world where "*all children have free access to quality education within an equitable system that respects and uphold child rights, especially that of girls so that they can live a life with dignity*". The Country Strategy Paper – III (Rights First: 2005-10) has declared the children as cross cutting theme for rights action and endeavour to make child rights central to our programmes with focus on right to education. It is guided by two principles that – (a) *all children must receive education through a common school system and must complete* at least 10 years of schooling and (b) oppose child labour of any form and commit to remove it through education. We believe that the best way to achieve this is by strengthening the government schools, which are still the largest source for providing education to children from the excluded communities.

This perspective is grounded in the understanding that Education provides the basic foundation for empowerment of the poor and excluded people to resist exploitation and to assert their rights – thus an integral component of '**Full Citizenship**'. India has the second largest education system and ensuring quality education offers unique challenges in addressing diverse sets of problems and requiring us to deal with the issue holistically. The specific issues that affect the education in the country are four-folded: Access, Quality, Accountability and Financial allocation. These gaps are compounded by grave inter-state disparities and by influence of macro-economic policies. Despite positive discrimination, children of the excluded communities remain at risk of drop outs, often receive education of low quality and voices of their adults do not receive attention in governance.

Five strategic objectives are formulated to combat these issues and achieve the goal of quality education in government schools. A set of principles that uphold the primacy of child rights and community agency guide our work to strengthen the government school system.

Strategic Objectives

Community mobilisation to ensure that all children in government schools receive quality education
Its central thrust will be community engagement with school processes. The key actions include strengthening the government school by activating the available spaces to ensure access and quality education in accordance with the SSA norms and to link up micro work to macro advocacy for enhancement. The work on eradication of child labour in all forms will receive focus to realise universal elementary education. The programme design will harness the State sponsored mechanisms of bridging out of school children and mainstreaming them into school. There would be consistent efforts to enhance community ownership for making schools safe from disasters and in environmental protection and sustainability based on improved understanding of climate change.

Conscientisation of the community is central to facilitate their engagement with the school processes. This will contribute to community taking ownership of the school functioning, monitoring retention of children in school through community tracking mechanisms and linking together the community groups as an organic coalition on education for ensuring actions on the ground as well as undertaking advocacy on larger structural issues that deny the children their right to education.

Secure sustained and meaningful citizen participation towards transparent and accountable school governance
The processes for engagement with civil society on education related issues will receive support and we shall endeavour to create or use the existing coalitions or platforms to demand equitable education for all children. This recognises that sustainability of such actions would involve activating the local governance mechanisms (PRI, PTA/SDMC) to play the role expected of each of them for functioning of the education system as laid down by law. This will facilitate institutionalising the processes of micro planning and transparent system of accountability. The interventions will aim to generate coherence in thinking and action on education through critical inputs derived from policy research. Early childhood education and safety of schools in the disaster prone areas through disaster preparedness measures would receive attention.

It is acknowledged that all these require engagement at all levels. At local level, the legally empowered Panchayats would be broad-based with progressive lobbying at other tiers of governance. At the national level, the campaigners will put pressure on the government and legislators to raise the profile of education. ActionAid would contribute in creating spaces for inter-linkage so that people's demands are followed through at every rung of the governance structure and their voice is heard at the national level.

Ensure no discrimination is practiced against children - especially girls
The interventions will challenge the existing practices of discrimination and violence and ensure that the schools provide a safe environment. This will enlist active involvement with NCPCR. The work will link up with wider struggles against stigma and discrimination and cut across all social groups. It will involve caste, class and gender analysis using *Reflect approach* to deepen understanding on hegemonic culture and addressing different forms of exclusion in schools. It will draw out policy gaps and promote system-wide reform to safe guard children from violence and discrimination. *Campaign on violence against girls* receives wider coverage as we believe that violence is a barrier to their right to safe and quality education**.**

Advocate for adequate allocation of resources for education and their effective utilization
The focus will be two fold: advocating for adequate resources for ensuring equitable and quality education for all children and demanding good governance for their effective utilisation. The work would challenge the hegemonic neo-liberal thinking and promotion of public-private partnership. The key actions will involve building sustained pressure on *Central and State governments* to prioritise education and to make resource commitments (minimum 6% of GDP). This will be supported by influencing budget formulation processes at all levels and undertaking the village level budget tracking as well as challenging *IMF/World Bank* imposed macro-economic norms that prevent spending on education at the levels needed to achieve EFA. A concerted effort will be made to build understanding on economic literacy and enable the community to make use of this tool as a powerful process of empowerment.

Advocate for effective legislation and policies that aims at equity in education
We will campaign for an appropriate new legislation that is geared towards the common school system. It will include media and legislative advocacy for central Right to Education Bill and subsequent rule making processes to make education as a political priority and achieve the right to education on the government agenda. *Campaigning against privatisation of public services and for* amendment of Child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 and adoption of national building code to protect the safety of the schools and the school children in all the disaster prone states of India would receive attention.

Partnerships in making Right to Education real
Our partnerships to ground these strategies towards realizing child rights and making right to education real are governed by ALPS organisational processes and nurtured by our overarching values and principles. We would engage with the three forms of organisations for achieving this. In all these processes, we respect the leadership of excluded people and therefore, we will be humble and modest.

Partnership with Micro action groups active on Education
This will be through the registered NGOs or Community based organisations (CBO) active on child rights and education. Its focus would be on achieving tangible rights for the poor. These partnerships would undertake building leadership of the communities for asserting and acting on child rights and free access to quality education in government schools. This would harness the spaces available within the system to strengthen the government schools. It would include collaboration with PRI, in proper implementation of schemes, support in their role performance and challenge them for practices that are against the interest of the child.

Critical engagement with Platforms and Coalitions
This recognises the need to work beyond funded relationships for making greater impact on child rights and right to education. This will include either joining with existing platforms/coalitions or facilitating emergence of issue based platforms/ coalitions through an organic evolution with membership drawn from community based organisations active on education. Three principles would govern this process of platform building: *Inclusiveness, Common minimum agenda and collective leadership.*

Solidarity with social movements and teachers unions
It involves creating wider alliances to fight against global corporate forces and neo-liberalism that affect the child rights and education. We would initiate dialogue with Social Movements on key development issues so as to narrow the gap. As part of this approach, we recognise teachers as our natural allies in strengthening the government school system and in demanding the accountability from the state for access and quality education. This requires us to engage with Teachers' Unions and the Parktonian Declaration would serve as the basis of this engagement. It will facilitate creating a single strong voice in education at regional and national levels.

Accountability

Tracking the impact of the proposed strategies on children is guided by the ActionAid Global Monitoring Framework. This requires putting in place adequate organisational mechanisms that results in learning from each other, supports advocacy and enables monitoring.

The centrality of strengthening government school system is within the principles of RBA. We give ourselves the five-pronged strategic objectives that complement each other to achieve the consciousness of the community to take responsibility of their children's education, gaining space for child rights at the top of the political agenda, eradicating all forms of discrimination and violence against children and in establishing the accountability of the State and solidarity of Civil society in these struggles. Our work of grounding and policy influencing gains momentum with alliance of the marginalised communities through collaborative matrix and strategic value addition of thematic interventions. Our efforts and results are uncompromising to the child-centric principles. Our only resolve is that *"every child enjoys completely her/his rights to access quality education with dignity and equity"*.

Education in Rights First and Rights to End Poverty

ActionAid's association with the issue of education in India dates to its inception in 1972 when 'Education for All' (EFA) was seen as the key to development. Its prime focus remained to encourage children of the poor and excluded families to attend school. The 1980s saw an effort to broaden the focus to community development through a multi-sectoral approach and the 1990s saw us entering into a Rights Based Approach (RBA). This shift to RBA raised certain fundamental questions relating to access, participation and equity. The Global Education Review in 2002 has assessed AA's work on education world wide and its recommendations for action form the foundation for our future work.

The starting point for action is the assertion of education as a fundamental right and as an enabling right - a catalyst for human development. This has implied a clear stand for ActionAid and its partners to move away from the traditional role of directly running schools or NFE centres and instead taking sides with the poor people, whose right to education has been denied, mobilising them to assert their rights and building pressure from below. This stand also recognised the need to support the process of building alliances and coalitions on basic education in all the countries where ActionAid works and undertake steps necessary to get education to the top of the political agenda - to make it a priority issue that builds up a passionate movement to demand change. Over the years, ActionAid has emerged as one of the leading organisations worldwide consistently raising the issues of education. Some of the major achievements have been:

- Conceptualising, piloting and disseminating the Reflect approach to adult learning (now used by over 500 organisations in 70 countries and awarded the UN International Literacy Prize 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008).
- Facilitating the emergence of national and regional coalitions on education – linking NGOs, teachers unions, social movements and a huge diversity of other agencies.
- Co-founding and playing a lead role in the Global Campaign for Education (which mobilises education activists in over 100 countries)
- Securing some significant advocacy outcomes at global level (with our allies) e.g. Fast Track Initiative to enable countries to achieve the Universal Primary education – Millennium Development Goals, European Union Aid to education.
- Promoting cross country research on e.g. costs, violence against girls in schools, donor finance, HIV, school governance, adult literacy
- Facilitating global consultations across civil society on key education policy issues (e.g. MDG Task Force reports, Dakar Framework for Action, Adult Literacy benchmarks)
- Bringing grassroots perspectives into high-level global processes (e.g. EFA Global Monitoring Report, High Level Group meetings to review the report, EFA Working Group, World Bank evaluation of education)

In these achievements, there is the crucial role played by our partners and communities - thousands of them have come together to ensure that poor and excluded children gain access to quality education. Local engagement has been the base of all our education work - the source of our credibility to bring others together around the issue at national and international policy levels. In our grassroots engagement we have seen again and again that education is often a top priority for poor and excluded people. Our firm belief is that if a good quality school is available even the poorest parents will send their children.

Why we work on Education

ActionAid India sees education is a fundamental human right, the responsibility of the State and a central element of the development policy for ensuring social justice. It implies specific obligations on the State to ensure education to all children in the age group 6-14 (as a minimum!), without any discrimination. Ensuring education for all the citizens enables them as adults to resist exploitation and empowers them to demand that their rights are respected - an integral component of '**Full Citizenship**'. Education should challenge injustices and transform children's lives so that they can play an effective and full role in their community, achieving their potential in economic, social and cultural objectives in more equitable manner, and being able to advocate for social change.[1]

The CSP III sees education as one of the basic rights (Right to Food and Livelihood, Health, Housing, Human Security being other rights) while focussing on the most marginalised communities of society (Dalits, Indigenous people, Most Backward Communities, Muslims, Urban Poor and People living with HIV-AIDS). We seek to create an alliance of the marginalised communities to engage with institutions of the State and ensure the realisation of these basic rights by building people's

organisations through effective conscientisation. This envisions creating a world where "*all children have free access to quality education within an equitable system that respects and uphold child rights, especially that of girls so that they can live a life with dignity*".

Right to Education is already part of the constitution and Article 21A (inserted through the 86th Amendment, 2002) says *'The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 – 14 years in such manner as the State may by law determine.'* This means that states are legally bound to deliver education, as opposed to it being an issue that they could choose to adopt as a priority. However, this policy is not translated into practice. In the present neo-liberal policy paradigm, the State has begun to shirk its responsibility to ensure basic education rights for all. Therefore, this constitutional directive must be followed up by substantial legislation and requires concerted demand from civil society and the community on the government to fulfil its obligation. We believe that 'Education for All' can not afford to fall in the cracks of centre-state and public-private wrangles.

Rights to End Poverty: 2005 2010

Poverty Eradication Goals: The following goals will form the rallying point for all our work:

Goal 1: Poor and excluded people and communities will exercise power to secure their rights

Goal 2: Women and girls will gain power to secure their rights

Goal 3: Citizens and civil society across the world will fight for rights and justice

Goal 4: States and their institutions will be accountable and democratic and will promote, protect and fulfil human rights for all.

Further, Education as a national priority in India programme links with the AA international agenda, where it is one of the six strategic priorities for 2005–10. We acknowledge that these themes are intrinsically intertwined and so it is impossible to achieve one without influencing the other. Also, we consider that Education is an enabling tool for the four goals outlined in the International Strategy Paper (Rights to End Poverty: 2005-10). Education is vital to ensure that these four goals are achieved, since if effective, it has the capacity to transform children's lives and to overturn the enshrined injustices and inequalities found outside as well as inside the school gates.

Three reasons form the context and need for AA to continue micro action on education:

- Education provides the basic foundation for empowerment of the poor and excluded people.
- Public policy and practice can be effectively influenced from micro actions (e.g. community mobilisation, quality schools)
- Fundamental duty of the State is '*to provide free and compulsory education of good quality without discrimination*' – we must facilitate its realisation and acceleration.

Education and Child Rights

Indeed, education and child rights emerge as organizational priorities. The right to education and the rights of children are inexplicably linked. One cannot consider the right to education without making an attempt to ensure that the basic rights of children are respected. Thus, our work on education needs to be seen within the framework of our recognition of the primacy of child rights.

Convention on the Rights of Child - Article 29 (1)- Aims of Education

The States parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
- The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential
- The development of respect for human rights as fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the UN
- The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilisations different from his or her own
- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin
- The development of respect of the natural environment

ActionAid's strength is its presence on the ground and the work it undertakes in the regions (24 States and 2 Union Territories) in the villages and the social groups it works with. This makes us among the largest organisations working on education in the country as far as the scale of operation and diversity of social groups and contexts is concerned. Rights of children remain at the centre of the work we do and are seen as cross cutting.

The innovation for action in the program is in our Development Initiatives, where the work to ground the right to education and strengthening the public system of education is supplemented by policy advocacy with an effort to address the issues from a holistic perspective. Often there is a dilemma about service delivery in education within the rights based approach. One is tempted to plan and implement programmes in areas where there are limited or inadequate services available. We believe that service delivery is actually an integral part of a rights based approach since services can be a means to actualise rights and the State has a responsibility to deliver.

So whilst service delivery and a rights based approach are not mutually exclusive, service delivery by AAI is an absolute last resort in clear emergency situations where we have to address immediate needs. If we do get involved in service delivery, it should not duplicate, takeover or relegate the government; we can only provide leverage for the community or duty bearer to takeover ownership eventually.

This multi pronged effort has great potential to create change at the local level through micro-macro linkages drawn at regional, national and international levels. The role of ActionAid is to ensure that the local community voices are heard at all these levels and that the change reflects their priorities.

Chapter - 2

State of Education in India

India has the second largest education system in the world after China. Indeed, over a third of population below 18 years, constituting 19% of world's children resides in India. Consequently, the scale of operation involved to ensure quality of Education for All in the country is unique and challenging. At the same time, the nature of problems affecting the education system are so diverse and often deep rooted that the solution cannot lie in the alteration of any one factor - its not about just shortage of money or just shortage of trained teachers or lack of political will. All these undeniably contribute to the problems affecting the education system today - however, there is a need to look at the entire set of problems and deal with the issue holistically taking into consideration the specific context of the different communities. At the same time, it is essential to acknowledge the work done by the government to make this large and unwieldy system work. This section looks at the state of Education in India, linking the past policies and the present actuality.

The first law on compulsory education was introduced by the State of Baroda in the year 1906. It was discriminatory in nature with differential years of schooling for boys (5 years) and girls (3 years), but was a historic beginning. However, the actual progress happened over the half a century since Independence - the literacy rate, the enrolment and number of schools has gone up. Many fairly progressive policies and schemes have been launched, constitutional amendments made and new laws passed - Education has now become a fundamental right.

A Glance at policies schemes on Education

Year	Policies/schemes
1960	Sergeant Commission recommended night schools for primary education, technical education at certificate level in every district - teachers should be local, and the distance should be minimal.
1964	Kothari Commission set up: Education seen as key to national development – recommends 6% GDP investment in education.
1975	ICDS launched to provide for holistic development of children up to the age of 6.
1976	42nd Constitutional Amendment to change education from being a State subject to concurrent
1986	National Policy on Education (NPE) and Programme of Action (POA) adopted. Ramamurti report observed that separate schools are not compatible with the concept of a common schools system (CSS) and recommended an active teacher recruitment plan and places reserved for SC/ST teachers in institutions. Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act passed
1987-88	Operation Blackboard (OBB) launched - aims to improve material aspects of education (two reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather conditions, necessary toys and games material, blackboards, maps, charts and other learning material). 523, 000 primary schools covered with central assistance. AICTE vested with statutory status by an Act of Parliament.
1991	Minimum Levels of Learning: looks at quality of education to ensure that all children - regardless of caste, creed, location or gender, given educational opportunities of a comparable standard. Specified minimum achievable competencies for children in the age group 6 – 11 in language, mathematics and environmental studies.
1992	Revised NPE and POA based on Acharya Ramamurti Commission. It included inclusive education, forming a committee on SC/ST/Educationally background groups so that a single entity has responsibility in each state, the first two years of education should be taught in the tribal language. Lok Jumbish project launched in Rajasthan – looks at inclusion and aims at mobilizing village communities to ensure quality education for each child.
1993	73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments - lay down responsibility of local self-governance bodies for development, including education.National Council for Teacher Education created through an Act of Parliament - to regulate issues pertaining to teacher education in India.
1994	District Primary Education Programme launched in select districts to operationalize strategies for achieving UEE. Its basic objectives are:
	• To provide all children with access to primary education either in the formal system or through the non-formal education (NFE) programme.
	• To reduce differences in enrolment, dropout rates and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than 5%.
	• To reduce overall dropout rates for all students at primary school to less than 10%
	• To raise average achievement levels by at least 25% over measured base line levels and ensuring achievements of basic literacy and numeric competencies and a minimum of 40% achievement levels in other competencies by all primary school children.
1995	Mid Day Meal scheme launched with central assistance for food grains 'to give a boost to the Universalisation of primary education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impact on nutritional status of students in Primary classes'
1997	Saikia Commission clarified that a primary school should be established within a distance of 1 to 1.5 km from every catchment of 250 and an upper primary school within 3 km of every catchment of 500 households. It also recommended that the school timing should fit with work, and there should be hostels in districts to support those children who would not otherwise reach the schools.
2000	Revised National Curriculum Framework formulated laying new direction to education issuesJuvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act
2001	Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan (SSA) launched – aims to provide effective and quality elementary education to all children in the age group 6 –14 by 2010 with special priority on girls, SC/ST children and children with special needsNational Policy and Charter for Children formulated with focus on all aspects.
2002	Constitutional Amendment to make free and compulsory education a fundamental right
2004	Education cess levied for additional funds; EDUSAT launched
2005	National Plan of Action for Children.
2006	Set up National Commission for Protection of Child Rights under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment ActSachar Committee Report Tabled – highlighting low levels of education among Muslims in India
2007	Eleventh Five Year Plan billed as the Education Plan – emphasis on higher level of investment, making India competitive in global knowledge economy.
2008	SSA II – Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan launched - extension to secondary education - The Rights of Children for free and compulsory Education Bill (2008) tabled in Parliament, as a step towards eventual notification of the Constitutional Amendment

Unfortunately, a lot still needs to be done and despite the fact that education has now become a fundamental right, there is no central legislation in place to actualise it. The specific key issues that affect the education of the country are four - fold: Access, Quality, Accountability and Financial allocation

2.1 Access

Access to schooling has two aspects – physical and social. There has been considerable improvement as for as physical access is concerned with new schools being constructed on scale (103106 primary schools, 68170 upper primary schools and 63696 secondary schools built during 1990 - 2001: Ministry of Human Resource Development). This is partly due to the pledge of the Saikia Commission (1997). Another factor for access improvement is the scaling up of the Mid Day Meal Scheme (1995) with a provision of 300 calories and 8 - 12 grams of protein to all children studying in classes 1 - 5 in government and aided schools, EGS/AIE centres. In addition to the grains, the subsidy is given for transportation of food grains and assistance for cooking. Further there is provision for MDM during summer vacations in drought affected areas. As regards social access, there is often discrimination against Dalits and occasionally against Indigenous people and Muslims in schools that pushes them out. A large number of children (13.4 million) in the age group 6 -14 still remain out of school (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – Fourth Joint Review Mission, 2005) – most of them are from the marginalised communities. Further reflections into hindering factors that keep the children out of school indicate:

- There are still gaps in access in remote areas usually inhabited by Dalits and Indigenous people - since there is a loop hole to the effect of 'States have the power to select where it will be difficult to have a school within 1.5 km – for example, in a hilly area'.
- Inadequate livelihood options for parents and lack of adequate flexibility in educational system to accommodate their movement pushes children of migrants out of school
- Inadequate provision of bridging mechanisms. Bridge courses are disproportionately low in number (and often poor in quality) compared to the overall number of children out of school
- Access to schools for children with disability is hampered by lack of barrier free and disability friendly environment within the school and lack of appropriate approach roads to the school
- Adult literacy rates remain low - 42% (Census of India, 2001) and women and marginalised communities (especially Dalits, Indigenous people, and Muslims) are more likely to remain illiterate. There are also regional disparities - lowest literacy (39%) in Bihar (National Institute of Adult Education, 1993).

2.2 Quality

While access to schools has improved, the retention in schools is still a problem (70% to grade V: DISE 2006-07). Often this is a combination of push and pulls factors. Lack of appropriate livelihood opportunities for parents -compounded by the absence of a norm that all children should be in school and not working - pulls children out. On the other hand, the problem of quality and the absence of a welcoming learning environment in government schools push children out (PROBE report, 2005). The government itself has historically taken steps to focus specifically on quality through a number of schemes. Thus, Operation Backboard (the first attempt to codify national standards of quality), District Primary Education Program (serving as a precursor to SSA), Minimum Levels of Learning (defining minimum achievable competencies for children aged 6 - 11) and Lok Jumbish (involving local governance bodies in education processes) were some of the core government schemes for ensuring quality education. However, the quality of education in schools remains the biggest challenge.

The various schemes for quality improvement have served as the inspiration for launching the Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan (SSA). Its recent move has been extension to the secondary level (SSA II). Despite palpable improvement in infrastructure of schools, it is still quite far from addressing issues of quality. The norms laid down in the SSA are insufficient, but are an improvement over what existed earlier. The Comptroller and Auditor General Performance Audits of SSA (2006) and retention of children from Dalit and Indigenous people (2007) provide a strong critique of education under SSA. However, given its large size and channelising most of the government funds allotted for education, it is vital to work towards ensuring that these basic norms are actualised and the participation of the community is achieved.[2] These norms, though inadequate to provide good quality education to children, provide a starting point for demanding entitlements to 'equitable and quality' schools. However, the issue of quality in government schools needs to go beyond the critique of SSA. There are gaps compounded by grave inter-state disparities (Annexure - 1) – extended to district and even village to village. This needs to be factored in ensuring education for all. Three aspects assume paramount importance in ensuring a quality learning environment for children: teachers, infrastructure and curriculum.

Availability of trained and competent teachers
The SSA norms speak of at least two teachers per school and a teacher pupil ratio of 1:40. However, this ratio is often not met in several states and there are greater micro level disparities. If teachers are appointed, they are often untrained and low paid - "para teachers[3]" (1 in 10 teachers today are para teachers - 9.86%. Less than half of them are trained – 44.88%: DISE 2005 - 06).

Para Teachers - Our Position

The last few years has seen mainstreaming the approach of the use of untrained and contract based teachers as a means of cutting costs. This policy is one of the pillars of the structural adjustment programme (SAP) and serves to shrink the role of the state and paves the way for greater privatization. There are several advantages cited for their employment: cost-effectiveness, better linkage and accountability to the community and greater reach to marginalised categories of children. It is often stated that such teachers are more regular and produce higher learning levels, especially in the early grades. But concerns have also been raised on such employment. These para-teachers are low paid and insecure about tenure - therefore, are often low on long term commitment (especially in the absence of a career path). The hiring of unqualified teachers amounts to compromising quality - resulting in lower learning levels and subsequent risk of immediate dropout of children enrolled. This practice in effect reinforces existing inequalities in society and sanctions the creation of dual strands of education - for the poor and for the rich. Lastly, the hiring of such teachers de-emphasizes the professional nature of teachers' work and results in a fall in the standing of the teaching profession. ***Consequently, the stand of the ActionAid is an unequivocal "no" to the employment of untrained teachers.*** This is a stand that takes into cognizance the ILO Standards for teachers and the Parktonian Declaration. However, where untrained teachers are appointed, advocate for their skill up-gradation, regularization and integration into the professional workforce. We advocate for their access to quality distance education courses, backed up with mentoring support, leading to public examinations which must be achieved within a maximum five year time frame. As far as possible, we will encourage individual teachers or collectives of teachers in the areas we work to develop their skills and grow professionally. Further, advocate for in-service training provided to teachers to be commensurate to their actual needs and be undertaken in a meaningful manner (and support the process to the extent possible, supplementing not replacing existing government teacher training mechanisms).

The inadequate and poor quality of training has also been a cause of concern. There are also larger issues of policies that discourage posting in rural areas (no quarters for teachers in place of posting), involvement of teachers in non-teaching work (15% days spent), hidden discrimination against Dalit and Muslim teachers and lack of onsite support and monitoring (from within the department and by the community) that is compounded by the absence of leadership building of the head teachers in small schools (hampering innovation and initiative for change. A little more than half schools lack regular head masters). There is shortage of teachers overall, with strong regional and localised disparities (1:10 schools are single teacher -11.76%. 15.94% schools have teacher to child ratio of more than 60 and 4.94% more than 100 – DISE 2005-06). Also shortage of female teachers (28.3% primary schools lacked female teachers) and teachers from marginalised communities are noticed.

Availability of appropriate physical Infrastructure and materials

To make a school work - physical building and child friendly classroom, a blackboard, teaching learning materials (available and used), toilet (especially for girls) and water facilities are some of the basics that are essential. A related aspect is the availability of the Midday meal program to all government elementary schools in the country[4]. But most often all these provisions are inadequate - their supply delayed and quality poor. Further, in disaster prone areas, most schools are exposed to vulnerability as the constructions do not adhere to national safety code - there is risk of casualty among children, teachers and communities as well as loss of academic days (5-12 days as per National Building Code study, 2008). The students in their pedagogical discourse are blissfully unaware of disaster risk reduction and hence not educated on something so vital.

Curriculum and Learning Environment

- Shortage of basic necessities in schools - not enough classrooms, delayed up-gradation of EGS centres into fully functional schools, inadequate water and toilet facilities and absence of electricity.
- Delayed release of TLM grants and delay in textbooks reaching schools - Inadequate availability of teaching learning material (especially in small schools) and lack of its use.
- Delay in release of school development fund.
- Village level grassroots planning not taking place in the way intended resulting in disparities in allocation of resources.
- Lack of maintenance of the physical infrastructure already set up
- Frequent variation within the states and districts further compounds the complexity. Consequently there is often unequal distribution of facilities between "roadside" and "interior" schools. There is a need to recognise these variations and factor them while ensuring education for all. It requires us to go downwards and map the problems of the states.

Physical Infrastructure in government schools, DISE 2005-6

Schools without Pucca Buildings	1 in 3 (29.4%)
Single classroom Schools	1 in 10 (9.54%)
Schools without common toilet facilities	1 in 2 (41.9%)
Schools without a kitchen shed	7 in 10 (70.6%)
% Schools without a Blackboard	8%
% Schools Not receiving TLM Grant	2 in 5 (39%)
Enrolment in schools with student classroom ratio of more than 60	7 in 10 (68.9%)
% schools with electricity connection (2004-5)	1 in 4 (28.37%)

There have been attempts to ensure that the quality of curriculum and learning improves through child-friendly and attractive classroom environment. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 reiterates the need for curriculum tailored to individual capacity while providing an insight into systemic issues that are vital. But ensuring good learning is not just about good curricular content, but also considering the roadblocks in its implementation.

- There is continued lack of instruction in mother tongue in the first few years of schooling and non implementation of three language formula. As a result, over 12% children were found to suffer from severe learning disadvantage (NCF 2005 Position Paper).
- Lack of space for traditional culture of indigenous people and religious minorities within school curriculum
- Corporal punishment still prevalent in schools (65% of school going children reported facing corporal punishment) and 62% of it was in government and municipal schools (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007).
- Ending prejudicial discrimination and stereo typing within the classroom based on caste or religion specific to communities as well as gender. The long term effects of discrimination and stereotyping on children have been documented by various studies.
- School environment is frequently not inclusive for all – in particular for children with disability and Children Living with HIV-AIDS.

2.3. Accountability

Policies on decentralization appear to have an impact on increasing the amount of local accountability in education. Accountability in an education system is two fold - to the users (the parents and children) and to the system. The framework for the accountability to parents is laid down under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments[5] that have empowered local self government bodies for undertaking action in the villages for development in general and education in specific. Several states also have state legislations that lay down specific responsibilities and roles for the village level bodies in education. There is a strong case for community control over schools and evidence in a number of states of the positive effect of doing so. The fact that these statutory bodies are empowered to take action to ensure functioning of the school can be put to good use. Passing of the Right to Information Act (2005) has also provided a powerful tool for ensuring transparency within the system. Some of the common issues are:

- Inadequate capacity building of Panchayats, PTAs, VEC, SDMC and poor quality training that is usually limited to the position holders, not the entire elected body (Sarpanch not the Panchs, PTA President not the members).
- Lack of representation in leadership positions of persons from marginalised communities and women
- Reduction of role of PRI as implementing agencies rather than "deciders" and presence of multiple parallel committees at the village level without involvement of Gram Panchayats
- Inadequate role in planning and decision making despite SSA recognizing community's role in this regard. Community participation in preparation of micro-plans is limited. Centrally prepared district plans do not reflect village level reality.
- Lack of financial transparency at larger levels in the system - at levels above and beyond the school
- Lack of facilities, adequate human resources and autonomy of CRCs and BRCs to enable them to fulfil resource needs of teachers in their areas
- DIETs not playing the role expected

Karnataka Gram Panchayats (School Development and Monitoring Committees) 2006

The 73rd and 74th Amendments lay down specific roles to be played by parent/community groups and Panchayati Raj bodies. The most progressive legislation in this regard is that of Karnataka Gram Panchayats (School Development and Monitoring Committees) 2006. This requires setting up School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) in each panchayat. It consists of nine elected members of the parents' council (three women, two members of the school committee, one from a minority background, and three others) as well as local Panchayat members, a teacher, health-worker, head teacher, school benefactors and two students. The SDMC is responsible for preparation of the Annual Work Plan for the school, monitor and verify attendance of teachers and students, ensure enrolment of all non-school going children, ensure provision of special facilities for children with disability, monitor drop out rates and ensure retention of all children, convene meetings of the Parents' Council, ensure the overall hygiene of the school, help augment infrastructure facilities, hire local persons as teachers, ensure a minimum of 220 instructional days in a year, periodically review the performance of teachers, facilitate the provision of need-based training to teachers, periodically review the performance of students and facilitate compliance with NCERT standards, periodically review and monitor the school health programs, supervise all properties and finances of the school, submit constructive suggestions to reform the school to the CAC, CRC, ensure that all government schemes like Midday meal scheme etc are implemented in the school, ensure that the Child Helpline Number is displayed and advertised, protect school premises against encroachment and nuisance and address grievances or complaints made by students, parents, teachers and non-teaching staff from the school. In order to undertake this wide range of roles, the state empowered the local bodies - SDMCs with specific rights. The members were trained by the Centre for the Child and the Law (CCL), with the support of the government of Karnataka. Various factions attempted to undermine the SDMCs and politicise its functioning, but CCL used the media to combat those efforts. Though there is still a range of issues facing the SDMCs, there are concrete impacts - improved local accountability, financial management and parental involvement. The relationship between the committees and the teachers has also improved; '*The teachers are calling the SDMC members to the school themselves.*' The present efforts make use of the strength of grounded community mobilisation and combine it with consistent inputs towards strengthening the governance system. This initiative has engaged with legislative mechanisms to set up a progressive system of community mobilisation.

2.4. Financial Allocation

To address the problems described above, the government needs to put its money where its mouth is by backing rhetoric with financial allocation that would ensure quality. The Kothari Commission (1964) recommended that 6% of GDP should go towards Education and the UPA government promised to do so as part of their Common Minimum Programme. Unfortunately, the government has consistently spent in the range of 3 - 4% of GDP.

Table: Public Expenditure in Education as a Percentage of GDP						
	1981-82	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96	1999-2000	2001-02
Total Education	2.49	3.00	3.59	3.60	4.22	4.18
Elementary	1.09	1.39	1.58	1.44	1.58	1.66
Secondary	0.81	0.92	1.10	0.98	0.94	0.98

Source: Website of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India

Since SSA is a centrally sponsored and time bound scheme, the need to sustain financing of the systems set up after its completion creates a certain degree of anxiety among states, especially those with weak fiscal status. This (along with the inadequate allocations) in turn leads to 'cost effective' measures like a freeze on appointment of regular teachers, appointment of para-teachers, multi-grade teaching and talk about community funding and school vouchers. There are four related, but distinct, issues that need to be considered in this regard:

- Influence of macro economic policies and conditionalities on social expenditure
- Policy consequences of the shrinking education budgets
- Increased private cost on schooling
- Extent the funds reach the village

Influence of macro economic policies and conditionalities[6] on social expenditure

The prevailing neo-liberal[7] economic philosophy and policy context influences educational programming in two ways - in the form of conditionalities imposed by the IMF, World Bank, WTO, GATTS and other international monetary institutions and through the direct influence of the prevailing macro economic paradigm. Central to this paradigm is the belief that fiscal deficit must be minimised, if not eliminated, which results in cuts in services across the board. In addition, neo-liberal reforms legitimise the proliferation of private schools and the informalisation and vocationalisation of education. It is also of concern that the government is playing to these external institutions, either by adopting their policies or by replacing domestic investment in education by externally loaned money. Externally funded projects risk losing local accountability and motivation, and can unintentionally replace legitimate structures with an imposed 'other'. At the same time, specific policies supported by the World Bank like the use of Education Vouchers to promote 'choice' that have been disproved in the context of developing economies elsewhere are being promoted in India.

Policy consequences of shrinking education budgets

One of the largest components of the education budget is teacher salaries. Also constitute recurring expenses that need to be borne for several years. Cutting on costs pertaining to teachers consequently results in high level of 'saving'. The solution is to employ lower cost (and less trained) para-professional teachers. The suggestion that India should get used to 'multi-grade'[8] and 'double shift' teaching is again a concern. While multi-grade teaching has its relevance if applied appropriately in conditions with low pupil teacher ratios (1:20), this methodology is unfortunately being applied on pupil-teacher ratios at which it is impossible to maintain and without necessary teacher training and support.

Another suggestion that has been voiced off and on is the use of community funds to bolster government expenditure. While in the short run it gives the community ownership over the school and encourages it to hold the school accountable, in the long term it creates larger disparities in school education. Wealthy communities will be able to fund their schools to a greater degree - creating and perpetuating inequality and absolving the government its responsibility for school education.

Increased private cost of schooling

The NSS 52nd Round data estimates that an average Indian parent spends Rs. 701 on primary education and Rs. 1281 per annum on upper primary education of their children in 2005 - 06.

However, there is large variation in Out of Pocket expenditure across different States, regions and type of Schools. In government schools, the major private costs go towards books and uniforms. In private schools out of pocket expenses go towards school fees, books, stationery, uniform and transport.

Deflated to 2005 - 06 PricesSource: NSS 52nd Round in Primer of Budget Analysis: Taking the Case of Elementary Education; CBGA (2007).

Per Capital Private Costs of Schooling

	Primary	Upper Primary
All India	701	1281
Rural	416	896
Urban	1609	2141
Type of School		
Government	360	871
Local Body	473	1016
Private Aided	1653	1884
Private Unaided	1994	3018
Quartile		
Poorest 20%	276	596
20-40%	428	805
40-60%	587	1016
60-80%	837	1260
Richest 20%	1610	2166

Decreasing investment on education by the government places greater burden on parents who are forced to spend money on the same. This is not only a cause of a large share of dropout (with parents unable to afford the cost), but a violation of the right to a free and compulsory education guaranteed by the constitution. Per child cost estimates for poor children are between Rs. 1200 -1500 annually (National Curriculum Framework 2005).

Funds reaching villages

While the overall low allocations is a definite area of concern, it is essential to also consider the extent to which funds allotted reach the Panchayat and serve the purpose intended. Misappropriation, misallocation and delayed release of funds have happened due to lack of community oversight over the same (though provisions already in place empowering the Panchayats and PTAs).

Regional disparities

The discussion so far had been on the larger picture, focusing on macro trends and overall directions. However, it may be important to note that there are massive differences between States and within the states.

Elementary Education in India: Progress towards UEE

	National	Highest	Lowest
Number of recognised schools imparting elementary education	11,96,663	168969 Uttar Pradesh	86 Daman & Diu
Average number of instructional days in previous year	208	242 Tripura	154 Himachal Pradesh
Average Number of classrooms	4.1	26.8 Chandigarh	2.1 Assam
% schools with Student Classroom Ratio>= 60	16.45	66.84 Bihar	0.65 Sikkim
% Single Teacher Schools	11.76	48.42% Arunachal Pradesh	0.00 Kerala/ Lakshadweep
% Schools with Pupil Teacher Ratio >= 100	4.94	17.17% Bihar	0 Chandigarh, Lakshadweep
% schools having girls' toilet	42.58%	93.82% Delhi	8.76% Meghalaya
Average Dropout Rate at Primary Level	8.61	21.02 Orissa	1.14 Goa
% girls passed Grade IV-V examination with 60% and above marks	45.12%	69.97% TN	14.14% Tripura
Pupil Teacher Ratio	34	64 Bihar	12 Sikkim
% Female Teachers	41.86%	27.91% Bihar	82.70% Chandigarh
% Professionally trained teachers	78.21%	99.14 Daman/Diu, Chandigarh	15.92 Nagaland
% Para-teachers to total teachers	9.86%	38.67% Madhya Pradesh	0.34% Orissa
Days spent in non teaching work	16	36 Pondichery	3 Rajasthan

Source: Flash Statistics DISE 2006-7, NUEPA, 2008

Each state within which ActionAid works has its own unique history, culture, geography and traditions that influence the life of the people and the system of education. At the same time, the path that the democratic processes in the State have taken and the path of economic development adopted have also influenced the policies and practice of education provisioning. Thus, the experiences of high achievement in states like Kerala can be attributed to both progressive State policy and a previous history of people's movements in the State. The prevailing paradigm of the North East creates spaces for resurgence of tribal traditions in the form of revival of the process of Communitisation of Education in Nagaland. The tribal identity is in turn manifest in different forms for the education of the children of the Niyamgiri Hills of Orissa or Salwa Judum affected areas of Chhattisgarh. The millennia old practice of untouchability leaves a stronger stamp on the education systems in traditionally feudal states like Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh, than states with indigenous Dalit movements like Tamil Nadu or Maharashtra. The experiences of a Muslim school going child in Gujarat today is very different from those of suburban Delhi, although they perhaps suffer from many problems in common. India is a land of extremes, and there are considerable differences in the experience of schooling that children receive. These differences become even starker when taken down to the district, block or village levels. Within each village too, people of different social groups have a completely different experience of schooling.

Education of excluded (social) groups

State's commitment to education of all its citizens has been laid down in the Constitution (Articles 15-4, 45, 46) with positive discrimination in favour of the marginalised communities. Various policies, laws and programmes were drafted to ensure social, political and economic development of these communities. Despite this, the children of the marginalised communities remain at risk of drop out - often receive education of low quality and voices of their adults do not receive attention in local self governance. Millions of children joining the labour market are subject to exploitation and drudgery of work with little hope of capacities to seize opportunities. They are engaged mostly in unpaid domestic work and in the informal sector. Girls are subject to gender discrimination and pressured to marry early causing harm to their overall growth and development. Being out of school, the children suffer indignity and loss of childhood, are denied all their rights and live in a world of fear and anxiety. Even those children with disability are grossly neglected and face enormous difficulties in accessing schooling.

Number of Districts by Sex-wise Literacy Rate : Excluding J & K		
Literacy Rate	**Males**	**Females**
Up to 25.00 %	0	125
25.01 % to 50.00 %	80	218
50.01% to 75.00 %	276	90
Above 75 %	96	19
Total :	452	452

Source: Census of India, 2001 (www.censusindia.net)

In fact, lack of a social norm in favour of children's right to education adds to the government's indifference to providing all the necessary facilities to enable every child to go to school and continue to do so without disruption. Although ours is one of the largest educational systems in the world, it is woefully wasteful and inefficient - 54.6% children of whom 56.9% are girls drop out before they complete class 8 and 66 % of whom 68.6% are girls drop out before they reach class 10. This is most appalling among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslims. Further, even after five years of continuous presence in schools, only 60% of children are able to read, write and do basic calculations. All these barriers keep children deprived of their basic rights. At the same time there is an explosive demand for education and the past decade has witnessed how poor parents are making enormous sacrifices to send their children to schools.

ActionAid believes that it is essential to take sides with the most marginalised communities and ensure that they enjoy their rights. It is grounded in the understanding that these communities are most deprived and each of them face problems specific to them. In line with this, an analysis of the issues of child rights and right to education specific to social groups that CSP-III identified as core constituency is undertaken.

Dalits

Dalits are one of the largest marginalised communities in the country and form 16.2% of the total population; their educational status unfortunately remains below the national average. However, the philosophy of Ambedkar ("Educate, Unite and Agitate" for empowerment of the Dalit community) provides a powerful impetus for the improvement of education of the community. The challenge is to ensure an education system that empowers and ensures dignity for this most oppressed group.

- Establishment of separate "Dalit" schools by default to ensure that distance norms are met is often either Alternate Innovative or Education Guarantee Schools[9]. Therefore, issues pertaining to quality therein are likely to affect education of children. At the same time, delays in up-gradation of these schools are more likely to affect Dalits (NCF 2005: Position Paper on Problems of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Children, Leclercq, 2002).
- Clear discrimination in the school by "*savarna*" (high caste) teachers – in serving MDM, seating within the classroom, separate drinking water pot and calling of children by the caste. At the same time, there is negative stereotyping – dalit girls called to sweep class rooms and low expectations in learning from Dalit children (Kumar, 1992)
- Low representation of Dalits in local self governance bodies with a say in education issues like VECs and PTAs - especially in positions of influence, where they are able to make decisions concerning the development of the school.
- Low representation of Dalits in the teaching profession (especially women teachers) and untouchability practiced against those Dalit teachers that have been appointed. Only 12.2% of teachers are Dalits.

Indigenous people

Indigenous people account for 8.2% of the country's population (Census 2001) and their literacy is 40%; male - 59% and female - 37% (1999-2000: 55th round of NSS). The enrolment rates among Adivasi[10] children remains below the national average. They face question of identity due to gradual marginalisation by being denied their traditional rights. They suffer from the twin burdens of assimilation - their culture is lost through incorporation into the "mainstream" and exploitation - by the powerful dominant groups.

- Indigenous people's locations are in far off areas and usually scattered. Consequently, many habitations remain covered by schools that are located at distance exceeding the SSA norm. Such schools are likely to be disproportionately EGS/AIE and taught by para-teachers - consequently the issues pertaining to quality education are likely to affect the children (Leclercq, 2002).
- Instruction in the first few years of schooling needs to be in the mother tongue. But, non-tribal teachers speak the state language instead. There is shortage of teaching learning material in the tribal language and inadequate representation of tribal history and culture in curriculum that has alienating effect of school regime (NCF 2005 Position Paper: Problems of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Children).
- Shortage of secondary schools, considerable distances to be travelled to reach them and the absence of appropriate transport for children creates reliance on residential ashram schools. However, the number of hostels as well as seats in these ashram schools is not commensurate with the demand. The overall experience is that grants to the ashram schools are often delayed (or far below the sanctioned amount) and as a result they often suffer from poor infrastructure and inadequate teachers.
- There is a provision for residential hostels for girls under the Scheme of Strengthening Education among Scheduled Tribe (ST) Girls in Low Literacy Districts and Scheme for "Setting up Education Complexes in low literacy pockets for development of Women's Literacy" (59 such complexes during 2007-8).
- No convergence of tribal affairs, education and rural development ministries at all levels. There is divided responsibility over tribal department run schools in tribal areas.
- Tribal sub-plans make provisions for the education of tribal children. There is a need to track these expenses and ensure the funds reach the desired beneficiaries.

Muslims

The violation of basic citizenship rights of India's Muslim population, especially in the field of education led them with the lowest development indicators (Sachar Committee Report, 2006). While there have been policies that address Minorities (1986 and 1992 Plans of Action speak about the right of minorities to establish and administer an education of their choice), the focus has been relatively more on ensuring their distinctive status and identity.

- Muslims form 13.43% of the population of India; however, their education consistently falls below the national average. The enrolment (7.52%) is below their share in the population (DISE Flash statistics, 2006-07).
- Discrimination against Muslim children in Government schools pushes them out.
- Curriculum does not adequately reflect Muslim culture and progressive decrease in the representation of Muslim role models is noticed in the mainstream curriculum.
- Saffronization of curriculum in some states.
- Inadequate implementation of three language formula affects teaching of Urdu in Urdu speaking community. At the same time, inadequate materials in Urdu and lack of future learning opportunities in the language at post primary level creates a block - resulting in drop out.
- Government recognized Madrasas do not follow the same norms in terms of teacher availability, teaching learning materials and midday meal like other government schools. There is need for modernization of curriculum in Maktabas and Madrasas despite the fact that only a small share of Muslims attends them.
- Unrepresentatively low number of Muslim teachers

Children with disabilities

Both the 1986 and 1992 Plans of Action recommend that children who can be in primary schools should be enrolled by end of the ninth five - year plan. For those who cannot be integrated into regular schools, special schools should be provided with the curriculum focused on vocational training and teachers trained to deal with disabilities. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation) Act 1995 emphasized that 'it is a statutory responsibility for governments to provide free education in an appropriate environment for all disabled children up to 18 years old'. The UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability (2007), which India ratified, lays a much more progressive paradigm for the education of children with disability. Some states in India (like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) have made significant progress by

bringing out inclusive policies - but in many other states, policies are not in place to enable children with disability to access quality education.

- There are no universally accepted estimates of children with disability in the country. This is often because government estimates grossly underestimate the numbers since enumerators are not fully trained for identification. Similarly, estimates of children out of school vary.
- Overwhelming number of children with disability remains uncertified and consequently deprived of the welfare schemes of the government.
- There is a prevailing belief that education of children with disability is synonymous with education in special schools despite evidence to the contrary. Consequently, not enough efforts go into the training of all teachers to deal with differences.
- If children with disability are placed in mainstream schools, the support offered for their education is often inadequate in terms of availability of teaching learning materials and efforts of the teachers to ensure inclusion. Physical access to schools still not maintained - 73.4% schools lack a ramp (DISE: 2006-07).
- SSA has made several provisions for the education of children with disability; however, these usually fail to reach them.

Girl Children

Girls' education issue has been repeatedly forming part of all the government's policies and plans (from the National committee on Women's education 1958 to the NPE and the NCF as well as SSA, 2000 frameworks). Actions taken to prevent marginalisation include altering textbooks to make them more gender sensitive, offering incentives and encouraging women teachers. Often the girls and women are clubbed as a single category (especially in view of blurred boundaries between the two with early marriage and motherhood prevalent in India). But there is a need to recognize that girls of an adolescent age are a distinct category with their own rights and needs different from that of fully grown adults.

- Dropout rate among girls exceeds that of boys.
- Direct as well as the hidden curriculum of the classroom reinforces the gender role stereotypes (NCF 2005: Position Paper - Gender Issues in Education).
- Violence against Girls - especially in schools, but also in the communities and on the way between home and school pushing the girls out of school and violating their rights.
- Child marriage resulting in dropout of girls. Average age at marriage for Indian girls: 18.3 (2001 Census)
- Involvement in child labour as part of household work is a reason for dropout of girls.
- Shortage of toilet facilities in schools pushes girls out of schools.
- Shortage of women teachers means the absence of female role models in the education system. There is lack of women friendly policies to ensure appointment of female teachers - lack of incentives, lack of quarters for female teachers in rural posting, lack of transport facilities.

Urban Poor

Some projections show that by 2025, half of the country's population would be living in urban slums. Most slums are highly underserved in terms of schools which are often of very poor quality. In addition, the insecurity of tenancy and livelihoods of the urban poor, results in their moving quite frequently from one location to another - as a result, children drop out of school. Thus a huge number of children in urban slums are out of school. A special case is that of street children – about 11 million children lived on the streets and of which 420,000 lived in the six metropolitan cities of the country ("50 Years of Child Development: The Challenges Ahead" by DWCD, Ministry of HRD, Government of India, 1997)

- Transient existences of urban poor - slums are seen as temporary entities and so no plans for the education of children residing in these areas.
- Interruption of education of children of families displaced through relocation of slum.
- Efficacy of local governance for education in Municipal bodies with a large geographical coverage is a concern. At the same time lack of homogeneity in population makes community participation difficult
- Education of children on the streets, on platforms and children of homeless families pose difficulties.

Children affected by disasters   natural and human-made

It is estimated that 54% of India's landmass is prone to earthquakes and 64% to floods. In the decade 1990-2000, an average of 4344 people lost their lives and about 30 million people were affected by disaster every year. The disasters leave a terrible impact on everyone, but especially on the most vulnerable and even among them the children. Some estimates suggest that

one of three persons killed in Tsunami were children. The vulnerability gets compounded further with experience of implications on their dignity while accessing relief and rehabilitation after the disaster.

- In spite of high causality among children - their right to protection does not receive enough attention in the approach and design of disaster work.
- There is lack of sustained strategies for building disaster preparedness of children and communities in areas at risk for disaster
- There is continued prevalence of structurally unsafe schools and inadequate space for disaster risk reduction and understanding of climate change as part of the curriculum in schools
- Post traumatic stress and need for counselling for survivors and developing of coping skills among children often left to chance.

Other Marginalized children

Other categories of most marginalised children include child labourers, migrant children and children of sex workers, children trafficked (for sex work and as domestic labour in urban areas) and children living with HIV-AIDS, children in conflict with the law and living on railway platforms. New categories of children continually appear under this section. The issues of child labour and education are interlinked with every child out of school being a potential child labourer. Street children lack proper living conditions, receive inadequate health care, are exposed to occupational illnesses and toxic material, have an increased rate of infectious diseases, an increased risk of family violence and mental health problems and are subject to nutritional and educational deprivation. Children living on platforms (especially girls) are at risk of violence, sexual abuse and addiction and are deprived of education. Migrant children face disruption of their educational schedule. Trafficked children are deprived of a supportive home environment and forced to work under inhuman conditions. HIV has serious effects on children from two counts – infected and affected status. They often grow poorly and are more risk of infectious diseases. They are subjected to stigma and discrimination. The children of PLHA give up school to become wage earner and end up as orphans – left without any support. Children in the areas affected by armed struggles are at risk of being pushed into becoming child soldiers.

Strategies for grounding Right to Education

The Rights First (our Country Strategy Paper III) for 2005 - 10 has declared the children as cross cutting theme in core constituencies for rights action and expressed its intent to work on right to education. In line with this perspective, we endeavour to make child rights central to our programmes - with focus on education. *We believe that all children must receive education through a common school system and must complete school education irrespective of their age* - at least up to 10 years of schooling.

We envision that all children have free access to quality school education within equitable system that respects children's rights, especially girls and challenges the injustices so that they can live a life with dignity. To realise this vision, we oppose child labour of any form and commit to remove child labour through education. We believe that the best way to achieve this is by strengthening the government schools, which are still the largest bodies providing education to poor children. This requires ensuring that these schools become competitive with the best of the local private schools – thus contributes to achieving the common school system. All this understanding is translated into a goal: "**Ensuring that government schools provide quality education to all**" that sets the direction of our work in education of children from excluded communities.

Principles that guide our work to ensure the government school system is strengthened

(i) **Moral space** - Working with everyone within the framework of the law must be adhered to at all times. It is only through transparency, honesty and integrity do we attract the participation that achieves the norm that 'no child must work and that every child must attend full time formal school'.

(ii) **Inclusion** of all social groups, classes and communities in the programme must be adhered to in building this social norm. Exclusion would only result in shifting the issue from the agenda of child rights to issues of identities or class interests.

(iii) **Trust** the community in their ability to resolve their situation regarding child rights and enforcing the social norm.' Mistrust of their ability will only result in the initiative shifting to outside the community and the norm will not be sustained.

(iv) **No parallel institutions to the state are created to dilute the empowerment of the community:** The community must be allowed to reform the institutions of the State to focus on child rights. It is in the process of accessing these institutions that individuals realise their strength and are empowered.

(v) **Objectivity:** There must be no other issue influencing analysis or plans other than the protection of child rights. Differences of opinion need to be managed through this perspective and build a consensus leading to the norm that children must not be exploited and the place they belong to is school.

(vi) **Consensus:** The emphasis of the programme must be on building processes for the total involvement of the community and following democratic decision making. Only the community sets the time table for this. Working towards the achievement of externally imposed targets disempowers the community.

(vii) **Safe and Secure access:** End all forms of violence and discrimination against children in schools, in particular girls and children with disability.

Five specific objectives provide direction and focus to achieve the goal during the strategic period of CSP-III. These are largely in congruence with the strategic objectives of ActionAid International Education theme. Our approach to achieve these objectives would rest on our belief that most parents want their children to study and our faith in the capacity of most teachers to deliver quality education to children. Their energies are restrained because of bottlenecks in the governance of the schools, limited opportunities for them to take initiative and a general perception that government schools do not provide good quality education to children. We will work within the existing system together with our partners to support the government education system to fill up the existing gaps and demand accountability at all levels. We will deepen our engagement with the government schools rather than focus only in getting children enrolled in schools. We would thoroughly document our work (ensuring that good practices are backed up by testimonies) and research the work of other organizations to ensure that there is no reinvention of the wheel. This helps in sustainability of projects and allows shared learning between regional offices in the country programme, within ActionAid International and with other organisations.

We recognize that the strategies to deal with the most marginalised children (children of sex workers, children trafficked, children living with HIV - AIDS etc) need to be different from dealing with other categories of children. However, non

negotiable principle for engaging with these children is that all their basic rights need to be respected and optimum conditions for development are ensured with care and protection in a non institutional environment as far as possible. If that is to happen, sensitization of teachers, peers and other community members would need to be done prior to integration into mainstream educational institutions.

What do we mean by making schools functional?

Making schools functional is a process, not a product.

1. **The Infrastructure is adequate** – at least SSA norms followed (including toilet and safe drinking water); preferably one classroom per class; a building

2. **Child friendly environment prevails** – fear-free relationship between students and teachers; there is no discrimination against children; women teachers employed

3. **Teacher** comes on time and regularly; is interested to teach; no corporal punishment; ideally, at least one teacher per class

4. **School is accessible** to children from all social groups with special focus on girls; for children with disability there should be provision for both physical access to school as well as learning in classroom

5. **Activities** within the school are implemented effectively – including mid day meals, sports activities, library, art, craft, music; school timings are followed

6. **Community takes charge** – no child remains out of school; community creates support systems for those who need it e.g. crèche for working women so that girls do not have to baby sit for their siblings; regularly participate in the *gram sabha* and highlight education related issues.

7. **Village Education Committees are effective** – members are aware of their roles and responsibilities, membership is inclusive (representation from different social groups, women are active participants); meet regularly, maintain records of the meetings, take decisions about school, transparency in sharing information related to funds, enrolment etc. Funds reach regularly, textbooks, scholarships etc. are given on time

8. **Children** enjoy going to school; learn well in school; continuous evaluation of children is done; they do not drop out of school;

9. **Supportive system** – support rendered to the school by the CRC/BRC, end of practice of employment of teachers in non teaching work; timely fund/incentive disbursement to school

Strategic Objective - 1:

Community mobilisation to ensure that all children in government schools receive quality education

ActionAid recognises the need for community to engage with the school processes. We will facilitate such processes through building the capacity of the excluded communities for effective utilisation of spaces available in the education system (PTA, SDMC, Mother Teachers Association - MTA) to ensure that all children have access to school as well as to demand that there is sufficient number of teachers to teach and the infrastructure is adequate to create a quality learning environment.]

We recognise teachers as natural allies in these efforts and so closely work with the teachers and their unions for demanding the accountability from the State for access and quality education. All actions for strengthening the schools would be undertaken in a collaborative mode with the community, teachers and self-governance bodies.

Key actions:

1. Grass-root actions to strengthen the government school system (with deeper engagement in and around schools) using micro work to link up to macro work. This includes innovative initiatives to demonstrate the scope of activating the existing mechanisms and their potential to scale up.

2. Strengthening the community to demand accountability of local self-governance bodies (VEC, PTA, and SDMC) to ensure access and quality education in schools.

3. Micro planning to ensure that provisions in government schools are, as a minimum, in accordance with the SSA norms and to feed it into advocacy for enhancement.

4. Work on eradication of child labour in all forms through promoting universal elementary education on the principle of children out of school being potential child labourers. With Food and Livelihood Rights theme, we will ensure no child labour on NREGA sites as part of output based family labour and demand provision of crèches at NREGA sites.

5. Harness the State sponsored mechanisms of bridging out of school children and mainstreaming them into school with successful retention. This will benefit from research into the problems of children out of school, inadequate provisions in government schools and quality overall.

6. Disaster Risk Reduction through schools involving participatory vulnerability analysis and social actions in areas prone to disasters. This linking to schools presents a unique opportunity – since these are the most universal institutions of the State. It would focus on preparing schools to be safe and be able to re-open quickly after a disaster. This has a powerful normalising and stabilising effect both on children and on wider communities. Further, there would be consistent efforts to enhance community ownership in environmental protection and sustainability based on improved understanding of the climate changes – immediate and long term in line with the Hyogo Framework.

Community mobilisation to energise local institutions for challenging the denial of rights and justice has been the strength of ActionAid. We will use this experience to organise the communities around the school and ensure that all out of school children in our work areas are not only enrolled, but regularly attend full time day schools through sustainable community mechanisms. We believe that the community mobilised on a set of clear and unambiguous principles with child rights at the centre would demand effective education delivery. Our efforts would be geared towards bringing together such organised community groups to form an organic coalition. This aims at strengthening the demand for education - creating community norm of sending their children to school and enabling them to exercise their rights in a responsible manner. Therefore, we will work with communities to be supportive of the schools and at the same time demand accountability from the system. Our role will largely be facilitative to foster the community processes in a sustainable manner. Political education occupies a critical role in such conscientisation process – with Reflect considered as one potential approach. It includes:

- Building capacity amongst community members to enable them to take ownership of the school functioning and create a core group of children active on protection of child rights. These groups are mobilised on clear ideological position on key issues.
- Facilitate participatory mapping and information gathering to ascertain the status of the schools in the area and track the same on an on-going basis for streamlining their functioning through community demand.
- Identify the children who have dropped out of school or at risk of dropping out and create community based tracking mechanism for ensuring their retention.
- Linking together the community groups active on education – leading to the creation of an organic coalition of community based organisations on education for ensuring actions on the ground as well as undertaking advocacy on larger common issues.

Creation of organic coalition of community based organisations:Grassroots Democracy to strengthen the Government Schools

Organic coalition is a concept that ActionAid is developing as an attempt to ensure grounded, sustainable and positive impact at all levels. Its need arises from a realisation that many current coalitions are based on assumed or manufactured issues decided by an organization or group of organisations on behalf of people and they then mobilise people to exert pressure on legislators or administrators to act on the issue. The experience has been that though the legislative framework is good enough, an assertive mobilisation of people is needed to see their rights are put into practice.An organic coalition would start with popular mobilisation around a core right such as education. Communities would be mobilised to remove the social and cultural barriers they themselves put in the way of education for all and then work with the local level institutional framework to resolve any barriers that exist from previous lack of dialogue and demand. Through this process, the issues that are genuinely outside the scope of the local community and institutions to resolve would be taken to the next level. Stakeholders from communities in the geography covered by the next level of administration would work together on common issues to repeat the process of dialogue, resolving what can be done at that level and taking forward intractable issues. In this way it is envisaged that the core structural issues that prevent basic rights from being achieved would be fleshed out, articulated and evidenced in a convincing manner. There would be a considerable degree of local ownership and cohesion of civil society around these issues and follow through would occur.Organic coalitions can only be developed through systematic, principle based community mobilisation with painstaking sensitisation of the community and development of technical literacy on education rights. This investment would however produce a very high return if it creates the foundations for organic coalitions. Once the foundations are in place, there is the potential for spontaneous replication in other communities as the benefits are seen. AA will look to continuously strengthen the processes of existing coalitions and platforms towards the goal of organic coalitions and seek to collaborate with good practice organisations in this field.It is our belief that coalitions need to have strong grassroots base and participatory processes that deliver positive outcomes for all participants at all levels and not place undue stress on long term advocacy goals. A humble beginning in that direction has been the Madhya Pradesh Education Campaign.This initiative was launched in 2004 for mobilising the community around the functioning of the government schools. The overall focus has been on creating a groundswell of public action across the State reaching out directly to over 50,000 households in 115 panchayats of 10 districts of the State through formation of Child Rights Protection Committees. These are mobilised on a set of non-negotiable principles pertaining to the education rights of children. These grounded actions are made possible through the engagement with local self governance bodies and creation of political mobilisation around the issue of education to ensure accountability and transparency in the system. Its results are evident in the functioning of government schools with a cadre of about 4500 members in regular community monitoring of schools by local governance bodies, appointment of new teachers (60), construction of additional classrooms (89) and tracking learning levels of children. This has linked 80% of out of school children (51% of them girls) to schools. This work at the grassroots led to policy changes like cancelling attachment of teachers and simplifying the mode of admission of children.

Strategic Objective - 2:

Secure sustained and meaningful citizen participation towards transparent and accountable school governance

ActionAid will support the processes of engagement with civil society on education related issues and endeavour to create or use the existing platforms and structures to demand equitable education for all children. While provision of education is the responsibility of the government, we believe that the civil society must engage with the system to ensure State's effectiveness in providing education to all children. This recognises that the sustainable mechanisms for such actions would involve activating the local governance mechanisms established by the 73rd and 74th Amendments and/or State Education Acts. At different levels, the people's voices must echo that State has and must fulfil its obligation to ensure right to education for all children.

Key actions:

1. Strengthen PRIs, PTAs/SDMCs to play the role expected of each of them for functioning of the education system as laid down by law.
2. Facilitate local self governance bodies to institutionalise the processes of micro planning, mechanisms for community based monitoring of schools and transparent system of accountability for utilisation of the school budget.
3. Enter into issue based alliances with existing coalitions, civil society platforms and teachers unions to hold elected representatives accountable in ensuring universal quality education for all children, especially those from the excluded communities.
4. Engage with elected people's representatives, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and mass media to create coherence in thinking and action on education by providing critical inputs derived from policy research.
5. Promoting *early childhood education* (especially for children traditionally excluded from school) through strengthening the preschool component of the universalised ICDS[1]
6. Encourage PRI and school management committees to ensure safety of schools in the disaster prone areas and put in place disaster preparedness measures.

All these require engagement at all levels. At local level, the communities lobby with the block or district authorities to strengthen their school. The best agencies for this action are those bodies at the village level that are legally empowered to do so through Constitutional provisions and the State Education Acts - the Panchayats. They would be broad-based through linking the process of their empowerment with the creation of community organisations active on education. These demands for change in the system are supplemented with progressive lobbying at other tiers of governance – at the State and national level. At the national level, the campaigners put pressure on the government and legislators using different means (e.g. media) to raise the profile of education and by building alliances or coalitions. ActionAid would contribute in creating spaces for interlinkage so that people's demands are followed through at every rung of the governance structure and their voice is heard at the national level.

Space for peoples voices at state level to demand transparent school governance

Elutheros Christian Society (ECS) has pioneered work on Communitisation in Nagaland since 1997. These ideas were adopted by the State when it passed the "Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act 2001", (subsequently clarifying its provisions for education in 2002 through the "Nagaland Communitisation of Elementary Education and Services Rules"). Recognition of this has come nationally and internationally, including the prestigious United Nations' Public Service Award" in 2008 for bolstering community participation. The learning from ECS work was that the community participation in managing government institutions and involving the poor in the process of planning and decision-making enhances the efficiency. In so doing, the organisation has relied on the existing tradition of collectiveness inherent in Naga culture. The Act provides for transfer of all the assets and resources of the school to the community and empowering it through training. The effect has been three-fold. Firstly, this has rejuvenated the sense of faith in the schools on the part of the community enabling them to send their children to school and support the system. Secondly, more efficient allocation and utilisation of existing government resources has been ensured by removing bureaucratic bottlenecks and increasing transparency. Lastly, the community has come forward to support the school utilising their own strengths. There has been a marked increase in the number of school going children, an increase in teacher attendance, better utilisation of school funds, enhancement in the monitoring of the quality and quantity of the midday meal scheme and overall strengthening of the maintenance of school assets and cleanliness of the school. If additional funds are needed for this maintenance, these have been generated through tapping a range of resources like collection of firewood from the forest, contribution of labour and donations from the local church. At the same time, there are instances where communities have come forward to enforce study hours in their villages, demanded that schools subscribe to newspapers, volunteered their own time within the school to provide the local flavour in the curriculum. The whole village community comes to look upon the school as shared and sacred property that has to be maintained together, not a structure set up by the government.

Strategic Objective - 3:

Ensure no discrimination is practised against children - especially girls

Our work will ensure that no discrimination and violence is practised against children and girls in particular in school – access and availability of quality education as well as child related entitlements (MDM and other special schemes). We will actively collaborate with NCPCR on these issues.

Key actions:

1. **Taking sides** with the communities excluded from school - linking them to wider struggles against stigma and discrimination. It will include inter-linkages with Dalit, Muslim, Disability and HIV-AIDS thematic groups. This is informed by research on girls and boys being denied their right to education.
2. Sensitise teachers through caste, class and gender analysis. Similar initiative with adolescent girls and boys.
3. **Reflect approach** particularly for women, to deepen people's own analysis and help them organise around education - linking excluded groups across States so that their voices are heard by policy-makers. Reflect serves as a powerful tool in empowerment of the community to challenge the hegemonic culture. Systematic efforts would be made towards building leadership within the community to position education as key for addressing different forms of discrimination in schools and ensuring efficacy in implementation of schemes targeted at the marginalised children.

REFLECT challenging the hegemony of exclusion and discrimination

Reflect offers huge scope for reflection and action to challenge the hegemonic practices and creating counter culture. The dialogue and critical analysis in its approach help in developing evidence base to illustrate the rights violations – especially child right to education. In India practising untouchability is a crime - but it exists everywhere in different forms. The children are no exception to this practice. This is sustained by caste hegemony and reinforced as an unwritten social norm. The conscientisation processes through critical analysis of social reality lead to identifying structural causes and building consensus on prioritisation. The collective social actions were drawn up as a response to such analysis and to challenge the discrimination at schools. Their first level of social action was with the local self government and school management committees. The action – reflection process of social action drew linkage to unequal power relationships and the potential challenges it poses to build counter hegemony. This whole process has enabled the community members for new action linked to power analysis at every stage. The results provide testimony to children enjoying their right against stigma and discrimination. A wide range of participatory tools are used within the Reflect process to create an open and democratic environment in which everyone is able to contribute. The process acknowledges power and endeavours to bring about equality in power relations. It breaks the culture of silence and enables members to raise their voice without fear. Challenging hegemony to achieve social justice is a political process and Reflect facilitates this political process to assert their rights against discrimination at school.

4. **Critical engagement with government to respond** to the rights of children from excluded groups and draw out policy gaps from our work to promote system-wide reform for strengthening the existing protective measures to safeguard children from violence and discrimination.
5. **Campaign on violence against girls** takes place in the wider context of patriarchy, gender-based discrimination and poverty. We believe that it is a barrier to their right to safe and quality education. We will join the Women Rights theme to strengthen this campaign.

Campaign on Violence against Girls

Violence Against Girls Campaign' (VAG) works on some of the more delicate gender issues that are often ignored. For example, the degree of 'eve teasing' that dissuades girls from attending schools, the lack of separate toilet facilities that force girls to stay at home when menstruating and miss out their education, the walk to school that potentially culminates in rape or trafficking and the fact that girls' very place in school is vulnerable. In all such cases, the girl child's education suffers. The campaign focuses on the following agenda:

Ensure that no gender-based discrimination takes place within schools.

- Create a space for girls to discuss about violence being faced by them on the way to school and inside the schools and take action
- Engage in policy advocacy with relevant stakeholders like governments and National Commission for Protection of Child Rights around this issue
- Create awareness and sensitisation on VAGS amongst school teachers, school authorities, communities, and parents.
- Sensitise media to highlight VAGS issues.
- Engage with other civil society organisations to bring VAGS in their agenda.
- Conduct research on extent of VAGS, document best practices of addressing it.
- Build capacities of partners to understand, identify and deal with cases of VAGS.
- Make VAGS an agenda of Making Government Schools Functional campaign.

Strategic Objective - 4:

Advocate for adequate allocation of resources for education and their effective utilisation

We will focus our efforts on advocating for adequate resources for education as a means of ensuring equitable and quality education for all children. At the same time, we work towards demanding good governance for effective utilisation of those resources. We would challenge the hegemonic neo-liberal thinking that influences a reduction of the State's responsibility and promotion of public-private partnership. REFLECT would be one approach in our work to make this happen.

Key actions:

1. Building sustained pressure on **Central and State governments** to prioritise education within budgets and to make long term resource commitments (minimum 6% of GDP); influencing budget formulation processes at local, district and national levels both directly and through elected representatives. Analysing education budgets across the full education system would support this.
2. Undertaking initiatives at the village level to track the availability and use of finances and ensure community capacity for doing this budget tracking.
3. Ensuring that **balanced investment** and priority to primary education is matched with investment and priority in secondary schools so that there is no bottleneck.
4. Challenging **IMF/World Bank** imposed macro-economic norms (e.g. low inflation targets, deficit limits, cap on public spending and wages, public private partnership) that prevent spending on education at the levels needed to achieve EFA.

Public Private Partnerships and Education: Our critique

Public - Private Partnerships (PPP) are contracts between a private sector entity entrusted by the government to deliver a service on behalf of the State. The argument in its favour comes from the point of view that the task of ensuring universal education is huge and calls for the coming together of all players (including the private sector). There is also the perception that the government system is inherently inefficient. PPP's opponents point to the fact that no country ever achieving universal quality education without a robust State intervention and that the inefficient, wasteful and inequitable results of market operations would affect long term welfare of children. Further, it has been pointed out that PPP are inexpensive to start (since they utilise existing government infrastructure), however, tend to be less cost effective to run since they call for setting up expensive control, monitoring and information systems to ensure contract compliance. Furthermore, it creates an unfair level playing field between schools that have to bid for scarce private resources, which are usually not allotted based on most need. Finally, historical precedent of PPP in education in India does not point to any degree of efficiency in the system.We oppose the incursion of private for profit sector for provision of education facilities and the handing over of government schools to the private sector. We agree that there is no real evidence that private run schools are innately more efficient. A strong monitoring system for private schools would need to be established which would call for considerable State investment cutting into any immediate savings made by bringing in private players. However, we do not oppose investment in development of school infrastructure by the private sector as long as the investments are routed through Panchayats and after ensuring community participation. Furthermore, every effort must be made to ensure that the investment occurs in consonance with the School Plan and that the needs of the most marginalised communities are met first. We strongly oppose school vouchers as failing to offer a real and enlightened choice to individual parents and because the carrying capacity and outreach of the private school system fails to ensure access for all children, especially from marginalised communities. The proposal (2008) to set up Model Schools through a PPP model has components that amount to a voucher system. It is alarming that this has been done without due process of democratic consultation.

To increase transparency in education and to make sure that the school is made accountable to the community, budget tracking at a local level assumes importance given the decentralised funding by the government. At present there is a lack of communication about where the funding is going and what it is allocated for. This is especially the case with programmes such as SSA that have provisions for community control over the fund utilisation. If the community is made aware of what the school is due and able to ensure that the spending is allocated appropriately, it is the first step to community empowerment. A concerted effort will be made to build our understanding on economic literacy and help people in the community to make use of this tool which has the potential of becoming a powerful process of empowerment. Budget process needs to be demystified and AA will work towards this end.

Budget tracking – legitimate tool for advocacy

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) lays down a set of norms for schools and an elaborate mechanism for the preparation of habitation level plans. Further, local self governance bodies have considerable oversight and auditing powers regarding the financial allocation and demanding additional resources to the school. However, both these norms and the processes are often neglected in practice. School Planning, Budgeting and Auditing form a cycle with the community and civil society having a clear role to play at each stage. Gram Vikas Samiti (GVS) in Samastipur District in Bihar had attempted to activate these processes on a small scale.GVS had been called in by Bihar Government to facilitate the process of holding elections for the VECs in the State, when it passed the Bihar Education Ordinance. GVS undertook the training of all the newly formed bodies in the Block and empowered them with the understanding of the functioning of the system (both in general and in terms of the SSA norms). They were involved jointly with the teachers in enrolment, retention and demanding additional facilities for the school. With a clear sense of school improvement, the elected peoples' representatives also looked at the school expenditures with specific SSA budget heads (e.g. teaching learning material, school development, school construction) - in terms of the amount released against the amount sanctioned (and eventually against the norm) and the time when the said funds reach the school and support given to the schools to ensure that the funds were spent appropriately. Having gained experience, they began to influence the process of planning by sending their demands as part of the process and in time. This has also created considerable trust between the community and the school for social audits on the functioning of the school. Thus the participation in the formal planning process created a situation where the school infrastructure was significantly enhanced – it has strengthened through being based on ground reality and the process of community demand gained legitimacy - providing civil society efforts another tool for advocacy.

Strategic Objective - 5:

Advocate for effective legislation and policies that aim at equity in education

We will join other advocacy groups and campaigns to demand for an appropriate new legislation that is geared towards the larger and broader goal of common school system for all children.

Key actions:
1. Advocate for the passing of "The Rights of Children for free and compulsory Education Bill" and influence subsequent rule making processes.
2. Work with elected people's representatives (Sarpanchs, Zilla Parishad and Block Chairpersons, MLAs and MPs) at all levels *and the media* to place the right to education on the government agenda and to make education as a political priority.
3. Undertake targeted *legal work to enforce rights* where they are being violated.
4. *Campaigning against the privatisation of public services and the voucher system*. Mobilising people around *free education,* challenging government policies and practices that impose costs on parents; building links with allies in other social sectors concerned with similar issues.
5. Campaign for enforcement of Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 and lobby for its amendment and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000.
6. Advocate with the State to adopt national building code for a set of minimum provisions to protect the safety of the schools and the school children. Our endeavour would be to lobby for this legislation in all the disaster-prone states of India. This will ensure that the schools since inception become safe and thus form a prerequisite for making government schools functional.

It is important to have evidence based research to support advocacy initiatives and also to build perspectives on the perceived gap areas. We will conduct and support action research that enables us to achieve our goal. We will utilise the experiences gained at the micro context to ensure policy advocacy in a praxis mode and make the State accountable to ensure child rights.

Our Partnerships in making Right to Education real

Our partnerships to work towards realising child rights and free access to quality education are governed by ALPS (Accountability Learning Planning Systems) organisational process of appraisal and nurtured by our overarching values and principles. ActionAid works with poor and excluded people and their organisations and with social movements, civil society organisations, networks, alliances or solidarity groups to enable them to secure their rights. We believe that such broad-based partnerships provide the space and structure to generate greater collective power and legitimacy. Through effective communication, trust, mutual accountability and transparency – we would encourage open dialogue, debate, negotiation and exchange of views without fear of repercussions. This dialogue recognises individual identity and autonomy while encouraging complementarities among partners. In all these processes - we respect the leadership of excluded people and therefore, we will be humble and modest. In this bottom up approach, we believe that all intermediaries need transformation and to achieve this, there should be shared learning - an interactive process both from above and below. This must include critical dialogue on objectives, performance and strategic relationship with other stakeholders and redefining them.

Given this organisational perspective on partnerships, ActionAid India engages with three forms of organisations - for achieving that '*all children have free access to quality education within equitable system that respects child rights and challenges the injustices*'.

Partnership with Micro action groups active on Education

Our work with poor and excluded people and their associations will be through the registered NGOs or Community Based Organisations (CBO) active on child rights and education. It is this form that takes up work and campaigns around citizenship rights at the local level. The focus of work at this level would be on achieving tangible rights for the poor with thematic integration done at the community level. These partnerships would, therefore, undertake building leadership of the communities for asserting and acting on child rights and free access to quality education. ActionAid commits itself to develop and implement strategies that enhance their political consciousness and the promotion and nurturing of child rights protection groups to challenge the discriminatory practices forms part of this community building process. These political processes would enable the marginalised communities to take control over the mechanisms of social control in society.

For this to happen, we would use the spaces available within the system and harness them to strengthen the government schools. The prime sources that offer such space would be the local self-governance bodies, which are legally empowered through Constitutional provisions (73rd, 74th Amendments) for undertaking action in villages for development in general and education in particular. We recognise that the ultimate task of ensuring sustainable mechanisms for action would involve activating local governance and increasing local accountability in education. Therefore, our engagement with PRI would be to collaborate with them in proper implementation, support in their role performance and challenge them for practices that are against the interest of the child.

Critical engagement with Platforms and Coalitions

There is a need to work beyond partnerships and funded relationships for making greater impact on child rights and right to education. Therefore, our attempt will be two-folded: first call would be to join with existing platforms or coalitions (NCE, ASPBAE, CACL, PCCSS, Wada Na Thodo and NAFRE) and second call to facilitate emergence of issue based platforms or coalitions. ActionAid will make deliberate efforts for an organic evolution of such coalitions at State or national level with membership drawn from community based organisations active on education. We acknowledge MVF as an expert resource on child rights and right to education and so partner with them in the platform process. The principles and tools of child focused community mobilisation with its central thrust on quality education form the co-branding. This would gain strength from the volunteerism of educated youth (tenth class), who act as 'child rights defenders'. These youth will assume key role in building the platform process and connect across social groups – this would have multiplier effort. This would serve as a model for our engagement with other national level organisations.

ActionAid believes that three principles would govern this process of Platform building: *Inclusiveness* – being genuinely open to bring together all those who are active on the child rights and education and share a *Common minimum agenda* – that brings together the groups on core ideas and principles and also facilitate a form of efficient leadership which does not allow monopolisation by an individual or organisation. We may welcome value addition from all constructive sources.

We acknowledge that our efforts to build national coalition with diverse organisations and networks in the past have been of limited success. Within the education sector, groups often hold rigid ideological and political positions - flexibility and

accommodation of diverse ideas is thus not implicitly encouraged. There are inevitable hierarchies and political and conceptual differences among the CSOs. Further, CSOs tend to come together more effectively for work that is short term and more 'event based', as it happened in the case of NAFRE and the Education Bill. However, we will attempt to synergise our strategies and overcome these challenges using the three principles of platform building – through a bottom up approach facilitating organic evolution from district to State and national levels.

Solidarity with social movements and teachers unions

Wider alliances are required to fight against global corporate forces and neo-liberalism that affect the child rights and education. They may be localised or go beyond State or even national boundaries. Engagement with social movements is a new terrain in which ActionAid has little experience. However, there is recognition that these are important actors in social transformation processes and that ActionAid has to learn from their experiences and seek effective ways of working with them. We would initiate dialogue with Social Movements on key development issues so as to narrow the gap and reduce the existing mutual distrust. We acknowledge that social movements are much larger processes and organised on membership basis. ActionAid processes of political education could facilitate conscientisation on larger issues of political economy and contribute to challenge the cultural hegemony that deprives the children their rights. Thus it builds up a passionate movement to make education a priority and put it at top of the political agenda and demand change.

As part of this approach, we recognise teachers as our natural allies in strengthening the government school system and in demanding the accountability from the State for access and quality education. This requires us to engage with Teachers' Unions and the Parktonian Declaration may serve as the basis of this engagement. We believe in their commitment to child rights, the capacity of most teachers to deliver quality education to children and recognise that their energies are restrained because of bottlenecks in the governance of schools. Teacher Unions and NGOs can work together by focusing on common points and combining national and grassroots issues. This engagement would need to happen at all levels with four agenda points serving as the core focus: quality education (demanding adequate trained and professional teachers - in particular female teachers, adequate infrastructure – especially separate toilets for girls and access to teaching learning materials), resistance to public private partnership and opposing appointment of para-teachers (as a fall out of neo-liberalism) and participation in enacting as well as rule making for the "The Rights of Children for free and compulsory Education Bill". ActionAid would emphasise on facilitating convergence of the existing coalitions to come together on a common platform. It will facilitate creating a single strong voice in education at regional and national levels.

It is essential to make this broad based through the inclusion of media, trade unions, networks, social movements and civil society groups. An alliance with Education International on this issue would be made. While our preference will be for a non-funding relationship with social movements, we will provide minimum critical support, when needed. We recognise that trade unions and their membership based character offer opportunities for solidarity to influence public policies and institutions. Our guiding principle in such partnership for rights action will be strategic coherence, seeking their support to strengthen people's struggles. We understand that there is need for political alignment and social change for trade unions through use of the philosophy of Paulo Freire and Gramsci - facilitating the work in a right based approach.

Accountability

The tracking of progress against our country strategy – including the Education thematic plan and the measurement of impact on children is guided by the Global Monitoring Framework that specifies four-fold dimension – improvement in conditions of rights holders (boys and girls from the excluded communities), rights consciousness (of adults of these communities), just and democratic governance by duty bearers and solidarity by civil society with struggles of poor to assert their children's rights and right to education. The accountability for achievement of this impact rests with the Education Working Group collectively and is shared by the senior management - given the triple axes approach of functioning. This requires putting in place adequate organisational mechanisms.

❖ **Change in conditions of poor and excluded people - Grounding rights**
  ● Improvement in Access to schools
  ● Change in Enrolment, attendance and Retention by social groups and gender
  ● Coverage of out of school children in bridge courses by social groups and gender
  ● Quality education - change in learning levels, school infrastructure (facilities in school, teachers appointed, availability of teaching – learning material)
  ● Access to ICDS created
  ● Disaster Risk Reduction – coverage and social actions to address vulnerabilities of schools (reference Participatory Vulnerability Analysis)

❖ **Rights consciousness - capacity, organisation, mobilisation of poor**
  ● Community Cadre – their knowledge and skillso   Collective actions on education issues, access to child schemes - redressal of discrimination (gender, caste, disability based) and violence.
  ● Community based Monitoring of schools and tracking retention of children
  ● Gram sabha resolutions and grounding of actions – efforts to activate micro planning, transparent accountability mechanisms that are put in place
  ● Community Mobilization to demand rights and action from local self-governanceo Reflect circles – nature of discussions and actions carried out

❖ **Policies and practices of the state and non-State (duty bearers)**
  ● Policy/Practice changes – Right to Education Bill, rule formation
  ● Increase in resource allocation based on micro planning/ budget tracking
  ● Collaboration with NCPCR on Child Labour Act and other State level policy issues
  ● Response to protests against Public Private Partnership

❖ **Mobilization of the civil society in support of poor people**
  ● Solidarity actions by Teacher Unions/Civil society organisations/ legislators / Alliances/Peoples' movements
  ● Larger mobilization at State level

A periodic information flow is designed on the above four aspects. Its perspective is to create an institutional mechanism that results in learning from each other, supports advocacy work and enables monitoring.
  ● Data on these aspects to be collected at the partner and regional levels – collated by the regions to act as a local tool. This information would then be analyzed centrally for feeding back to the regions and drawing a central direction.
  ● Report to consist of two parts - the principal actions undertaken during a particular period and the quantitative achievements made during that period. This information will be available in segregated manner by social groups and gender – and would contain both qualitative and quantitative information.
  ● The outcome and focus areas of follow up will be shared at the Regional Project Partners' Meeting as accountability mechanism.

Within this framework, the monitoring of the functioning of government schools is located. Three components are considered essential to maximise the effectiveness of work in strengthening the government school system. These are achieved progressively as the community group evolves in its maturity (impact related to rights consciousness).

a. *Participatory planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation* for true community based actions to happen. The poor and excluded people must take part directly in all the processes of local programme appraisal, planning, implementation, monitoring and reviews.

b. *Transparency* of the NGO or CBO to ensure credible practices. The community is more likely to support organisations that are fair and honest.

c. *Sustainability* of the processes initiated and the readiness of the organisation to truly hand over the work to the people.

Conclusion

We have mandate for child rights and right to education with child sponsorship being the main source of income for our work on eradicating poverty. Also organisationally we are well placed to carry forward this mission, given our long and consistent involvement on the education issues since the inception at various levels of grounding and influencing. The perspective planned and strategies formulated are in continuation of this organisational journey with a renewed commitment towards realising child rights and their fundamental right to quality education.

The centrality of strengthening government schools is within the principle of RBA that the State has obligation to ensure that its children enjoy their rights and must be held accountable for any violation. The five-pronged strategic objectives complement each other to achieve that consciousness of the community to take responsibility of their children's education, gaining space for child rights at the top in the political agenda, eradicating all forms of discrimination and violence against children and in establishing the accountability of the State and solidarity of Civil society in these struggles.

Our work of grounding and policy influencing gains momentum with alliance of the marginalised communities through collaborative matrix of functioning and thematic interventions. Our efforts and results are uncompromising to the child-centric principles. Our only resolve is that *"every child enjoys completely her/his rights to access quality education with dignity and equity"*.

Select State-wise indicators on education (2002-3)

Indicators	Assam	AP	Bihar	Chhattisgarh	Gujarat	Karnataka	MP	Maharashtra	Orissa
Population (in millions)	26.64	75.73	82.88	20.8	50.6	52.73	60.38	96.75	36.71
Sex ratio	932	978	921	990	921	964	920	922	972
Total no. of schools	37026	87575	59706	30688	16518	51272	85225	60251	47572
Overall literacy rate	64.3	61.1	47.5	65.2	70	67	64.1	77.3	63.6
Female literacy rate	56	51.2	33.6	52.4	58.6	57.5	50.3	67.5	51
% SC enrolment in primary & Uttar Pradesh	9.95	38.5	14.05	15.25	8.7	19.3	17.4	15.85	19.3
% ST enrolment in primary & Uttar Pradesh	16.85	16.3	1	28.35	16.2	7.55	20.05	11.4	21.2
No. of disabled total^	530 300	1 364 981	1 887 611	419 887	1 045 465	940 643	1 408 528	1 020 371	1 021 335
Enrolment of children with disability	15726	128420	112824	26925	32012	75007	92168	78635	54231
Student classroom ratio	37.8	35	59.8	38	41.6	30.8	41.2	33.2	68.8
School teacher ratio	3.96	4.09	2.55	2.9	4.84	4.58	3.41	5.19	2.75
Pupil teacher ratio	19.4	29.4	69.4	35.2	39.4	30.2	32.6	27.8	35.4
% of para teachers to total no. of teachers	0.7	8.2	0.9	17.14	0.7	0.19	26.6	0.58	4.29
% of female teachers to total no. of teachers	27.91	36.94	17.66	22.69	41.7	48.92	29.9	29.39	27.42

Indicators	Rajasthan	Tamil Nadu	UP	WB
Population (in millions)	56.47	62.11	166.05	80.22
Sex ratio	922	986	898	934
Total no. of schools	81154	45902	119443	58698
Overall literacy rate	61	73.5	57.4	69.2
Female literacy rate	44.3	64.6	43	60.2
% SC enrolment in primary & Uttar Pradesh	18.05	26	30.75	26.2
% ST enrolment in primary & Uttar Pradesh	14	1.5	0.25	5.25
No. of disabled total^	1 411 979	1 642 497	3 453 369	1 847 174
Enrolment of children with disability	121807	60417	169979	83739
Student classroom ratio	27.6	33.2	42.4	59.6
School teacher ratio	3.37	4.89	2.94	3.75
Pupil teacher ratio	31.8	41.8	49.6	56.4
% of para teachers to total no. of teachers	11.25	4.3	6.2	0.23
% of female teachers to total no. of teachers	23.9	46.6	25.9	25.16

END NOTES

[1] This explanation of the way in which education is valuable to individuals and society is taken from a classification in Dreze and Sen (2002)

[2] The objectives of the SSA are to have all children in school in some form or other (Education Guarantee Camp, Alternative School, 'Back to School' camp) by 2003, all children complete five years primary schooling by 2007, all children complete 8 years schooling by 2010, to focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life, to bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010 and to have universal retention by 2010. Community Participation is a strong component of SSA.

[3] This is a generic term applied to characterise all teachers appointed on contract basis often under varying service conditions in terms of emoluments and qualification requirements. Official documents of state governments refer to them by terms like "shiksha karmis", "Shiksha Mitras", "Guruji" etc.

[4] Midday Meal Scheme has a long history especially in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, and has been expanded to all parts of India after a landmark direction by the Supreme Court of India on November 28, 2001. 12 crore children are so far covered under the Mid-day Meal Scheme, which is the largest school lunch programme in the world. Allocation for this programme has been enhanced from Rs 3010 crore to Rs 4813 crore in 2006-2007. Technically, it is referred to as the "National Programme for Nutrition Support to Primary Education".

[5] 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of the Indian Constitution, passed in 1993, devolved a significant amount of power over social sector and development planning to local level governments or *panchyats*. The constitution mandates a one-third reservation for women in *panchayat* assemblies. Panchayati Raj Institutions were to serve as instruments of planning for economic development and social justice.

[6] Conditionality in international development is a condition attached to a loan or to debt relief, typically by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank or in the case of bilateral aid, the donor country. Conditionalities may involve relatively uncontroversial requirements to enhance aid effectiveness, such as anti-corruption measures, but they may involve highly controversial ones, such as austerity or the privatization of key public services. These conditionalities are often grouped under the label structural adjustment as they were prominent in the structural adjustment programs. Other types of conditionality that often occur are aid which is tied to be used on a specific way. For example, many countries tie aid to the purchasing of domestic products, although this practice has drastically decreased over the past 15 years.

[7] "Neo-liberalism" is the political view, arising in the 1960s, which emphasizes the importance of economic growth and asserts that social justice is best maintained by minimal government interference and free market forces. This amounts to a return to the ideas of Adam Smith (Liberalism) who advocated the abolition of government intervention in economic matters ending restrictions on manufacturing and barriers to commerce, considering free trade to be the best way for a nation's economy to develop. Such ideas were "liberal" in the sense of no controls. This application of individualism encouraged "free" enterprise," "free" competition — which came to mean, free for the capitalists to make huge profits as they wished.

[8] Multi-grade teaching occurs within a graded system of education when a single class contains two or more student grade levels. It is contrasted with the usual pattern of classroom organization where a single classroom contains students of only one grade level. Multi-grading is traditionally associated with 'small' schools in remote and sparsely populated areas where one, two or three teachers offer a complete cycle of primary education. Multigrade schools have attracted attention in the developing country context because of their potential to increase primary school participation rates. While multi-grade schools may, in optimal circumstances, offer significant economic and pedagogical benefits, there are also several drawbacks to consider: student achievement in multi-grade schools may be lower in comparison to achievement in single grade schools if multi-grade programs are not supported with the required resources and if teachers are not properly trained. Demands on teachers' time are high and they need special training and materials which are usually not provided and students may receive less individual attention, and must often work independently.

[9] The education guarantee scheme (EGS) was launched in Madhya Pradesh in January 1997 as a community-centred initiative responding to the inadequate and uneven distribution of primary schooling facilities in the state. The government was bound to provide schooling facilities in 90 days to any community where there were 40 non-school going children in the age group of 6 to 11 years and no schooling facilities were available with in 1 km distance. The community was to organize the space for the school and select and appoint a teacher from the habitation. This school is up to class V after which the learners are mainstreamed in the nearest government formal school. This has been picked by SSA in the form of Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS and AIE). The scheme has had a positive effect on enrolment, bringing large numbers of children into school, however, the use of untrained teachers in a multi-grade setting and poor infrastructure has resulted in low quality, especially after Class III.

[10] **Âdivâsîs** "original inhabitants" are the indigenous people of India forming the tribal population. Tribal peoples constitute 8.3% of the nation's total population, over 84 million people according to the 2001 census. A number of traits have customarily been seen as establishing tribal rather than caste identity. These include language, social organization, religious affiliation, economic patterns, geographic location, and self-identification. Recognized tribes typically live in hilly regions somewhat remote from caste settlements; they generally speak a language recognized as tribal.

[11] ICDS is the Integrated Child Development Services is the world's largest integrated early childhood programme, with over 40,000 centres nationwide. Its objectives are to improve the nutritional and health status of children below the age of six years, lay the foundation for the proper psychological, physical and social development of the child, reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropouts, achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation among various departments to promote child development and enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child, through proper health and nutrition education. It is holistic in nature with preschool education for children for children aged 3-6 as an integral component; however, evaluations suggest that the preschool component of the same is weak.

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