

Educationally Backward Areas, Disadvantaged Groups and Children

The Sub-Group arrived at a consensus that equity is a cross-cutting issue that needs to considerable attention. It is important to understand the close connection between equity and quality-poor quality, for instance, impacts on equity and poor equity reinforces poor quality. Therefore efforts which are aimed at one must also include the other. The Sub-Group discussed the need for a renewed focus on equity in the context of three dimensions of disparity/disadvantage that are clearly evident in the education scenario in the country.

(a) Category A-Geography

Large variations between States districts, and blocks with respect to educational infrastructure and outcomes. Thus, basic school level learning conditions, viz...availability of schools, especially secondary level schools, school physical infrastructure and teacher availability. Also significant disparities exist in enrolment rates, gender gaps in enrolment, drop-out, survival and repetition rates across states, districts and blocks. The analysis of disparity can be extended to the school level also where there are large variations in PTRs and school infrastructure, student's attendance rates and learning achievement levels. Thus specific districts, blocks and Panchayats that are lagging behind in terms of educational infrastructure and outcomes would need higher focus and resources.

(b) Category B-Disadvantaged Groups

Gender and social category gaps in enrolment, completion and achievement levels. While these gaps are reducing consistently, in several parts of the country, gaps are of unacceptable levels and are not declining at a rapid pace. Gender and social group disparities exist across large parts of the country, but there are important regional and state-wise differences. There is some overlap between areas/pockets which are generally educationally backward and those that have high gender and social group disparities, e.g. parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, South Orissa, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

The disadvantaged faced by girls and children belonging to Scheduled Cast and Scheduled tribes has its basis cultural and traditional factors as well as social discrimination at the school. Socio-cultural factors and a history of neglect (in some parts of the country) have also adversely

affected the educational outcomes of children belonging to the Muslim minority. Some children belonging to the ethnic and linguistic minorities also face disadvantages in copying with the regular school system.

Thus SC and ST children, children belonging to religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities who have lagged behind in education would need special focus and strategies as well as adequate resources.

(c) Category C-Special Categories of Vulnerable Families

*Certain specific groups of children/students face severe disadvantage in their participation in secondary education owing to the specific difficult circumstances in which they and their families are placed. These include migrated families, families living in the slums, street etc. and the families by circumstances spend their life in difficult situations/conditions. These circumstances forced the students to drop-out of the school system and worked to earn to meet their families. This situation led the students discontinued their secondary education after class VIII. The disadvantaged faced by students with special needs is of a specific nature and may be discussed separately. A significant proportion of students/children in category C also belong to socially disadvantaged groups mentioned in category-B above. **Special strategies are required for these categories of children within the overall norms of alternative schooling/open schooling.***

Category-B (Children/Students Belonging to Disadvantaged Groups)

1. Scheduled Cast and Scheduled Tribe Children/Students

As seen in the several reports especially state specific reports, SES, DISE, Survey reports etc that educational indicators such as enrolments, retention and transition rates for SC and ST children lag behind those children belonging to other categories. Children from these communities are also disproportionately represented among others categories of children who have been identified as vulnerable where their education is concerned. These include the urban and rural poor, migrants, out of school girls, child workers and deprived urban children. Among children with disability, those coming from SC and ST and other marginal groups are likely to be educationally most at risk. Though poverty is a major constraint in the education of SC and ST, children from these communities face specific disadvantages in their education and these must be given serious attention. For SC

children these stem from the social discrimination, segregation and lack of access to resources and opportunities that they face because of their status. For ST communities it is their experience of relative isolation and neglect, destruction of their way of life and cultural difference that has led to disadvantages in education.

Hitherto the emphasis has largely been on expanding physical access to schooling for SC and ST children by relaxing norms for establishing schools in tribal and SC habitations and encouraging enrolment by meeting some of the costs of schooling. Quality issues have taken a back seat. It will be important for the plan to integrate access and quality informed by the principle of equity or fairness by addressing the specific disadvantages that these children face.

There are also groups that face social and cultural discrimination but have not been included in the category of SC and ST. Ultimately it would mean that school must become inclusive so that they are able to address disadvantage and diversity in education and cater to the needs of every child. Interventions in education to address these issues however should not be 'stand alone' programmes/strategies but must be linked with and facilitated by the overall efforts to universalize enrolment and retention in schools and improve their quality. Where incentives are concerned, we need to view them as strategies that encourage as well as enable parents to send children to school and from the perspective of the child, that make schools an attractive place for them. Thus improvement of the quality of education would in itself become the most crucial incentive for the children to go to school.

1. A. Scheduled Cast Community/Children

- While access to schools at the upper primary stage is now almost universal, there are gaps at the secondary stage. Provision of adequate secondary schools within paucity or reach of 5 km in all areas, including SC areas to promote the retention of older SC children especially SC girls. It is also important to ensure that the schools available in the neighborhood of SC habitations have minimum norms of infrastructure, other facilities and teachers. One of the most appropriate interventions for ensuring better participation of disadvantaged groups is to ensure that local

schools are well provided for, especially with required number of teachers and function regularly.

- Incentives such as free textbooks, uniforms, awards, scholarships etc must continue. The coverage of existing incentives like scholarships, the monthly/annual amount of the scholarship and the regularity of the payment need to be monitored on a regular basis across the country.
- Discrimination with SC children because of their cast status as reflected in school practices and teacher attitudes adversely affect the quality of schooling that children receive. These have to be seriously deal with in individual schools, monitor at the community level and in also addressed at the level of teacher education. The effort toward building inclusive schools (where teachers understand and are sensitive to issues of social disadvantage) must be an integral part of teacher education and not relegated to add on components in training programmes.

1. B. Scheduled Tribe Children

- Physical access to schooling, especially at the secondary stage is still an issue in most parts of the country especially in remote tribal areas. A targeted coverage of all eligible habitations for the secondary schooling facilities should be priority in the first two years of the 11th plan. In some remote, sparsely populated areas, it may be difficult to set-up secondary schools due to the small number of students/children. Two options need to be implemented for such areas. Schools in small habitations need to be planned. Two, adequate Ashram/residential schools need to be provided at locations that can provide access to a group of small habitations.
- Hostels are critical for children coming from educationally deprived communities to access middle and higher level of school education. These facilities need to be expanded. It is recommended that required number of hostels through girl's hostels scheme must be targeted. Need for hostels need to be identified focus should given to the tribal dominated areas/pockets.
- Seasonal migration is common in several tribal areas. Facilities like seasonal hostels should be provided in all such areas/blocks with high incidence of migration to help retaining children in the village when the parents migrant.

- In some very remote tribal pockets, for example in north-eastern states, teachers posted to schools are unable to get local accommodation on rent. States/UTs should consider approaching the ministry of tribal areas for providing funds for construction of teacher's quarters. The RIDF loan facility through NABARD could be expanded to include teacher's quarters in some pockets.
- Teacher absenteeism is a major problem in remote, tribal areas. The shift to selection of local teachers at village, panchayat and block level has helped to some extent. But there is need to improve monitoring and supervision in tribal districts and blocks to help improve teacher absenteeism/attendance and school functioning.
- Majority of schools in tribal areas have only limited number of teachers. It is therefore important to equip teachers in such areas with skills for conducting multigrade and multilevel teaching or meet the teacher's requirement. This would also require modified teaching-learning materials including workbooks.
- Special emphasize must be placed on teachers who are appropriately qualified and trained to teach in tribal dominated schools. The emphasize must be both on their skills, competencies as well as their understanding on the context of deprivation, discrimination and an appreciation of cultural difference in relation to their students.
- In some tribal areas where qualified teachers are not available, there must be special effort to create a cadre of teachers from the tribal community/youth. (These would be regular, qualified not para teachers) This link between school and a teaching can encourage retention in schools as parents see teaching as a career for their children.
- The policy of providing secondary education enshrined in the Constitution as well as in the NPE 1986 and the NCF 2005 needs to be implemented. There is enough evidence to show that children who start their education in their mother tongue are able to learn other languages as well as other subjects better in their later years. Thus this is not only a rights issue, but also crucial from the pedagogical perspective. Bilingual / multilingual education programmes that start with education in the child's mother tongue and then transit to the regional/ State language

and English need to be implemented on a larger scale, especially in remoter tribal areas. The strategy for intensive work for creation of curricular materials, training of teachers, academic support, evaluation and community involvement.

- A minimum condition that should be ensured in school is that the majority of the teacher should be able to speak the language of the children.
- In general, for tribal areas teaching-learning materials need to incorporate the life-situations of children to which they can relate. This work can be done best by DIETs in identified district after receiving specific orientation and human resources for this purpose. The NCF 2005 strongly recommends the use of local context in the materials and teaching-learning process. The orientation of teachers in such areas would also need to focus on issues of attitude and bias regarding tribal children and knowledge of local socio-cultural situation.
- Certain tribal groups e.g. denotified tribes, nomadic tribes that move from place to place and primitive tribal groups (PTG) would need special attention because of their specific live situations. Adequate attention has not been given to these groups in most States.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is in the process of consolidating schemes for supporting education to make a more comprehensive scheme that could complement through the education schemes and fill the gaps, especially those relating to infrastructure in identified tribal dominated district. Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the States /UTs in identifying needs in specific districts and blocks and ensuring convergent implementation.

1. C. Religious Minorities

The Ministry of Minority Affairs has identified 103 and more districts as minority concentration districts where the population of religious minorities exceeds 25%. These include districts with different religious minorities including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, etc. Under the prime Minister new 15 point programme, the targets, allocations and performance of RMSA in these districts would be monitored. Of the various religious minorities, Muslims are the most educationally backward.

RMSA starts undertaking sensitization of states and UTs on the issue of providing a special focus identified Muslim concentration districts.

Additionally resources have been provided to these districts for recruitment of teachers, construction of school buildings and classrooms.

The strategy of providing alternative schooling or open schooling system and reaching out to madarasas/maktabs/strengthening the teaching of general subjects for children who are attending Maktabs/Madarasas, but not going to regular schools is being followed in several states.

- Ensuring that adequately provided secondary and higher secondary schools are available in all minority concentration areas. It is crucial to ensure that upper primary schools are located close to Muslim Habitations to ensure that adolescent Muslim girls can continue their education.
- Social mobilization to promote the demand for education, especially for older girls. This will require a special effort from teachers, educational administrators and programme functionaries to work with parents, religious leaders, panchayat representatives etc. to overcome barriers due to social and cultural traditions.
- Religious minorities are usually not included in incentive programmes like scholarships. Children of religious minorities, especially Muslims may be provided scholarships at least at the upper primary stage in identified educationally backward district.
- Urdu medium/syllabus need to be set up wherever required, based on demand and the local language pattern of the Minority community. In other Muslim concentration areas, the teaching of Urdu as a subject may be encouraged, wherever there is demand.
- The focus of work under RMSA should be on ensuring that Muslim children attend regular schools. The strategy of providing grants to Maktabs / Madarasas should not be the dominant strategy for ensuring universal participation of Muslim children. Wherever possible, Maktabs / Madarasas could serve as institutions for providing bridge education for mainstreaming of children into regular schools.
- Wherever support to Maktabs / Madarasas to introduce general curriculum is considered necessary, the focus should be on ensuring education of equivalent standard. To that extent the present norms of AIE that provide for only one teacher are inadequate. Additional faculty may be provided for teaching Urdu, if required. Arrangements for evaluation of students studying in

Maktabas / Madarsas could be linked to the assessment systems in regular schools. Or else, the Open School could arrange for assessment to ensure equivalence.

- A more useful strategy, especially for older girls in the 15+ age group who have not been to school and cannot be mainstreamed easily, could be of setting up schools / centres (with adequate teachers) that run for at least 4 hours in the premises of Maktabas / Madarsas in the forenoon / afternoon, before or after the religious instruction. This pattern has been tried out in some parts of the country. Though it results in a heavy workload for the child, it ensures that adequate time and teaching support is available during the period earmarked for the regular school subjects.
- KGBVs need to be located within Muslim dominated areas with Urdu medium if necessary depending on the local demand.

1. D. Linguistic Minorities

- The basic principle of providing education in the language concerned as far as possible should be implemented sincerely. This is an important issue in most of the inter-state border areas and places with a concentration of migrants with a different language background. For Muslims the issue of Urdu medium needs attention in some states. For Muslims, tribal groups residing in remote areas, who speak a language very different from the medium of instruction in schools, a strategy of transitional bilingual/multilingual education could be implemented.
- In several states/UTs work relating to development of textbooks and other teaching learning materials and training modules is highly delayed or sometimes not taken up at all for the minority languages. Under RMSA it should be ensured that curriculum and textbook development, TLM development and training programmes are held regularly for all languages used as medium of instruction in particular State/UTs.
- Additional resource persons with a particular language background could be provided in identified blocks or pockets to provide academic support to schools with a different medium of instruction.

Gender Equality

In general, the Gender equality frame work draws clean distinctions and demonstrates interrelation ships among the concept of gender parity, gender equity and gender equality, the frame work reinforces other key concern such as access, quality, continuity, relevance, and learning outcomes. The framework also emphasis the relationship between and among students and teachers and boys and girls, implying the need to transform deeply ingrained behaviors and gender norms that have negative impacts on the aspirations and life choices of girls and boys.

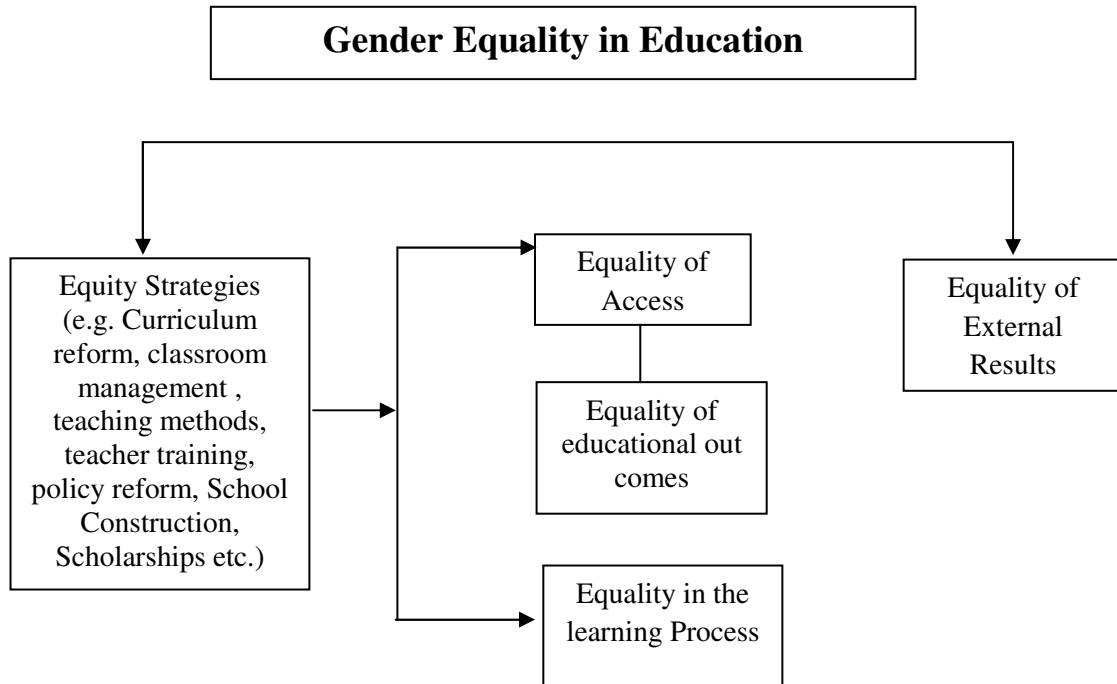
- Gender equality is a broad concept that is best understood within the wider context of social exclusion-the systematic discriminations of individuals based on characteristics such as ethnicity, race, sex, economic status, place of residence, language, and health status.

In addition to addressing the injustices resulting from gender bias, a gender equality approach to achieving full participation needs to operate within the large sphere of social justice so all children have a chance to succeed.

Key terms in Gender Equality

Terms	Means	Looks like
Parity	Proportional representation of boys and girls in educations system relative to the population per age group	Equal No. of boys girls enrolled in school (Proportionate to the population)
Equity	Strategies and processes that provide fair and equal chances for all to pursue and benefit from educational opportunity.	Scholarships, teacher training on gender sensitive pedagogies, curriculum revisions to remove gender bias, separate safe and clean latrines for girls and boys, and programs to promote math and science among girls.
Equality	Females, males have equal rights, freedoms, conditions and opportunities for realizing their full potential in society.	Male and female leaders in society, equitable and positive power dynamo's and empowered female and male citizens.

Gender equality implies that male and female have equal opportunities to realize their full human rights and contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political development. Reacting parity in enrollment and increasing access to education is necessary but not sufficient for achieving equality and ought to be considered a “first stage” measure of progress towards gender equality in education.



The four dimension of gender equality include:

- ❖ Equality of Access
- ❖ Equality in the learning Process
- ❖ Equality of educational out comes and
- ❖ Equality of external results.

General Suggestions

- ***Special training programme for teachers and resource persons to deal with issues of diversity and discrimination within the classroom.***
- ***Improve decentralized planning process to identify needs and strategies for disadvantaged groups at block and district level.***
- ***Promoting researches for identifying strategies aimed at equity that has had a favorable impact. Also dissemination and sharing of identified good practices.***
- **Utilization of innovation funds or any other untied allocation preferably for promoting education of disadvantaged groups.**
