

SPECIAL FOCUS GROUPS

1. Coverage of Special Focus Groups Including ST/Tribal's of difficult to reach Areas- Chapter VI of the Framework (Equity)

Referring to chapter-6 of the framework clearly focused for coverage of the special focus groups with different interventions & strategies. Referring to **para 6.1** of the chapter where coverage for girls including other disadvantaged children are focused with different strategies including hostels facilities and transport. It also talks about the female teacher's quarters in the remote areas. Equity plan basically cover;

- Special Plans/Strategies for the districts with ST/SC/OBC/Minority concentration.
- Efforts to provide all necessary facilities for the differently abled children.
- Expansion of open & distance learning.
- Focus on development of local specific and relevant materials to ensure context specific quality.
- Provision for hostel facilities.
- Community awareness/ mobilization for ensuring community ownership in the schools with their involvement.
- Convergence with other schemes/programmes with more focus to high concentration of minority population.
- Regular intervals of retention drive in high drop-out areas/pockets in the SFD (Special Focus Districts) districts.
- Special academic support to children for their continuation and improvement of quality.
- Provision for providing basic necessities such as textbooks, uniforms, stationeries etc.

2. Recommendations by 'Working Group committee on Secondary Education' for 12th Five Year Plan

2.1 Equality and Social Justice:

- The school system, in the Indian context, has to strive for equality and social justice in several aspects such as gender inequality, economic disparity, social inequalities with particular focus on SCs and STs, cultural diversity (including the issues of religious and linguistic diversity), education of children with special needs (both physical and mental), and rural-urban disparities.
- All these dimensions need to be reflected not only in organizing schools but also with sensitivity in the curriculum, in order that all children are able to complete secondary education. The issue has a structural dimension too as almost 25% of the secondary schools today are private unaided schools whose clientele comes only from the privileged sections of society. This means that the children studying in such schools are deprived of the experience of knowing children of different social classes and diverse cultural background.

2.2 Mapping for Identification

- A comprehensive exercise of school mapping at the ground level by the States and UTs is an imperative need in order to appropriately and adequately address issues related to providing access as also to ensure optimal utilization of existing infrastructure.
- An appropriate model defining the partnership arrangements between government and non-governmental sector may help facilitate utilization of the potential of the private sector to absorb additional demand for infrastructure in secondary education.
- There is an urgent need in this Plan period to focus on Economically Backward Blocks (EBB) to reach the learners from the marginalized groups to provide them access to secondary education.
- There is also a need to revisit policies and strategies with reference to existence of private secondary school network dominated by small schools/sections and largely influenced by political and local factors, which would over a period become unsustainable in terms of maintaining standards of equity and quality in provisions, processes and outcomes.
- Most interventions under the schemes are designed to ensure equitable participation of all categories of children including girls, marginalized groups and also differently abled children.
- Various schemes make provisions such as providing girls' hostel in EBBs, enabling conditions in the schools for Child with Special Needs (CWSN) under IEDSS, RMSA etc. These schemes individually have provided sufficient support for the marginalized sections of the society.
- However, their standalone implementation has yielded little results as far as convergence and holistic planning and implementation are concerned. States/UTs find it limiting to plan interventions for the same school under different schemes and seek separate approvals in different PABs held at different durations.
- Convergence of planning, appraisal and implementation under different schemes for same segment of society needs to be considered under 12th Five Year Plan.

2.3 Provision for residential schools/hostels for existing schools:

To enhance access and participation of children from difficult, hilly and sparsely populated areas and **most importantly districts afflicted with civil strife**, residential schools/ providing hostels for both boys and girls in already existing secondary schools is necessary as also being the only viable option. As a graded step, till such hostels are established, transportation as a specific component under RMSA must be factored in to provide immediate remedial measure at least in highly disturbed or geographically remote areas.

2.4 Support to out of school children through open schooling:

At secondary level open and distance schooling system plays a critical role in providing access especially to disadvantaged group. Presently under the framework no guidelines has been formulated on the support for education through open school. It is proposed that students of disadvantaged segment like SC/ST and girls may be provided support by strengthening of NIOS system (as proposed separately in this chapter). However, a detailed and well thought out plan needs to be developed for mobilization and publicity of open school as one of the options available for secondary and higher secondary education.

2.5 Promoting Equity with Inclusive Education: In order to promote equity and inclusiveness, the following steps are envisaged during XIIth plan:

- NIOS has been offering its Secondary courses in 6 regional languages as mediums. It offers 17 languages as subjects at Secondary level. It is envisaged to offer more languages as

subjects as well as mediums in a phased manner as per emerging demand. When SOSs are set up in all the states, the Regional Languages will be taken care of by the respective SOS.

- Efforts to set up more Study Centres in Educationally Backward Districts/Blocks as well as special regions/states like the North East and other hilly and hard to reach regions.
- Courses can be made more equitable (as also relevant) by introducing elements of work education and integrating skill development with academic courses that may help in livelihood and poverty alleviation. NIOS offers one vocational subject along with academic subjects at the secondary and the senior secondary stages. This option will need to be strengthened by making available more choices in vocational subjects that are relevant in today's market economy.

2.6 Deprivation of the Marginalized Groups:

- While an unprecedented rise in enrolment is evident of strong demand for education among the SC and ST, accessing basic school is as yet a massive problem. Though school participation rates have increased but attendance rates are quite unsatisfactory at the elementary level which is still worse at the secondary stage.
- Drop out, failure and low scholastic achievement affect SC and ST to a far greater degree than general category school children.
- Many of our schools now have large numbers of first generation learners. They would be completely dependent on the school for inculcating reading and writing skills and nurturing a taste for reading, and for familiarizing them with the language and culture of the school, especially when the home language is different from the language of school. Many such children are also vulnerable to conditions prevailing at home.
- The cumulative impact of enrolment of the diverse group of children in schools leads to low rates of school completion. Gender disparities are conspicuous on all educational indicators revealing the under-education of girls. Gender and class along with tribe and caste constitute fundamental categories of exclusion.
- Furthermore, significant inter-state, inter-regional and rural- urban disparities exist in many states and regions. Intra-caste and intra-tribe variations are also sharp and indicate that the relatively more marginalized of SC and ST groups experience gross educational deprivation. Scheduled tribes appear to lag behind the Scheduled Castes in most States barring largely the North – Eastern regions, due to specific socio-historical factors.
- School curriculum and pedagogy must provide opportunities for every child's learning and her free, creative and multidimensional development. The culture and experiences that the SC or ST Child brings to the school must be integral to an egalitarian teaching learning process in fulfillment of the goal of a meaningful education for all children.

2.7 Vocationalization at Secondary level

- A revised scheme is in operation since 1992-93. The Scheme provides for financial assistance to the States to set up administrative structure, area vocational surveys, preparation of curriculum, text book, work book curriculum guides, training manual, teacher training programme, strengthening technical support system for research and development, training and evaluation etc.
- It also provides financial assistance to NGOs and voluntary organizations towards implementation of specific innovative projects for conducting short-term courses. The Scheme, so far, has created a massive infrastructure of 21000 Sections in 9619 Schools thus catering to diversion of about 10 lakh students at +2 levels.

- The grants released so far since the inception of the Scheme is Rs.765 Crores. Based on the recommendations of various Committee/Review Groups, the existing Scheme has been revamped.

2.8

- **Approved interventions for the SC/ST/Girls and other difficult to reach groups at Annexure-I**
- **Approved schools in the districts (Special focus district) including the tribal dominated districts as at (Annexure-II)**
