

SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is an effort to universalise elementary education by community-ownership of the school system. This flagship programme seeks to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6 to 14 years age group by 2010. Karnataka is one of the states that have been actively implementing SSA ever since its inception. There are 10 major interventions and 104 programmes or activities within these interventions in Karnataka state.

The present scenario in Karnataka is that about 98% of the population has been provided lower primary schools within 1 km distance and higher primary schools within 2 km distance. The number of schools has increased by nearly 25% in the last 10-12 years. School enrollment has increased significantly in recent years through special enrollment drives. In classes 5-7 the increase is nearly 5%, a very encouraging sign. The drop out rate in classes 1-4 came down from about 10.5% in 2000-01¹, to about 3.39 percent in 2007-08², the average drop out rate at primary level has further come down to 3.39.

With the project period reaching its completion time, the focus now is on community ownership of the programmes, quality of education and equity.

II. NEED FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

There have been various studies undertaken independently by external agencies as well as by SSA on several

aspects of SSA initiatives, including both qualitative and quantitative dimensions.

The aspects/indicators used for assessment in most of these studies are more objective like access to schools, number of teachers in schools, availability of classrooms, toilets, presence of learning teaching material etc. But tangible aspects which are more subjective in nature like quality of teaching, class room interactions, behaviour of teachers etc are not adequately addressed in most of these studies, especially from the perspective of the 'end-user'. There is thus a compelling need to undertake a comprehensive study which covers both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the initiatives from an end-user perspective to understand their success in a better way. The current study is an attempt to address this gap.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Using the CRC approach as a base and building on to other methodologies, PAC carried out an intensive assessment of the SSA programme in four districts of Karnataka (Gulbarga, Raichur, Shimoga and Bangalore Urban) with the following objectives:

1. Obtaining feedback from children in school and their parents on the quality of schooling in terms of accessibility, reliability and satisfaction with the services delivered particularly in relation to the quality of education received and in meeting the equity goals.
2. Obtaining feedback from teachers on their assessment of the quality of services they provide, the efficacy and helpfulness of the training imparted to them in improving the quality of their performance, in increasing retention and preventing dropouts and the challenges and problems they face in delivering the services.

¹ www.schooleducation.kar.nic.in/primaryeducation

² Elementary education in India: Progress towards UEE Flash Statistics, DISE 2007-08, NUEPA, 2009.

3. Assessment of the schools in terms of adequacy and quality of infrastructure provided and their utilization.
4. Carrying out an assessment of out of school children especially in those districts where the number of out of school children is high with special reference to equity. After extensive discussions with SSA, this objective was modified and it was decided that out of school children would be included in the study as and when cases were found in households (where at least one child is currently attending a regular school) covered in the survey and case study research.
5. To suggest measures to improve the ongoing initiatives in the direction of equity and quality of SSA in Karnataka.

IV. METHODOLOGY

An Advisory Committee comprising of experts from the education field was set up to obtain guidance and support through the course of the study.

For a better understanding of issues that are related to the implementation of SSA programmes, preliminary scoping field visits and observations were carried out in regular as well as mainstreaming schools in and around Bangalore, along with discussions with relevant stakeholders.

The CRC approach that had hitherto focused on user feedback was widened to include feedback from implementers and community-level stakeholders as well. The scope of the study also included a case study research exercise that would help understand the undercurrents and underlying nuances of issues related to the impact of the SSA programme in various settings. Case study research methods such as observation, in-depth interviews were identified as tools that would highlight those nuanced variations and explanations.

Data collection thus encompassed a wider set of stakeholders and the instruments were accordingly designed to suit the purpose. Seven sets of data collection instruments were designed, which included observation schedules and interview schedules. For carrying out the case study protocols, observation checklists and interview schedules were developed and piloted. The fieldwork was initiated during mid June 2008 and completed by end of September 2008.

Sampling design

The study was carried out in three districts in Karnataka - Bangalore Urban, Gulbarga and Shimoga. These were selected based on indices such as access rate, net enrolment ratio, out of school children and geographical location. With UNICEF expressing interest in the same assessment being carried out in a district where it was actively involved, Raichur district was also eventually included in the exercise for both the survey and the case study research.

In each district two talukas (zones in the case of Bangalore Urban) were selected based on the same above-mentioned criteria. From each taluk, 5 Gram Panchayats (wards in Bangalore Urban) were selected using random sampling. All villages in the Gram Panchayat / ward were covered in the survey. For the case study research, two villages from two GPs were selected in both Hassan and Raichur.

The sample size covered was as follows:

Sample type	Selection criteria	Sample covered
Observation of mainstreaming prog.	All	79
Incharge of mainstreaming prog. / institution	All	73*
Teacher conducting mainstreaming programme	One per institution	79
Observation of regular school	All	229

Sample type	Selection criteria	Sample covered
Interview with head teacher	All	228
Interview with teacher	One per school	222
Interview with parent / children	100 per GP	4000 (7278 children)
Interview with SDMC/CAC member	2 SDMC members per school	442**
Interview with Public Official	Taluka / district / state level	90
Case Study Research - Two talukas each in Hassan and Raichur	Two villages each from two GPs	

*In 6 schools, head teachers and teachers were the same person.

** The number of SDMC members is not adding to 458 (2 per school) because the schools observed also include aided schools.

V. KEY FINDINGS

In the light of the stated objectives above, the study reveals the following

✍ Accessibility and reliability of education facilities have found favourable responses from parents as well as children. Proximity of primary schools, timely receipt of incentives such as text books, uniforms, etc. and regular holding of classes in the schools seem to be motives for the same. This is reiterated by children who have responded that they like going to school and find teaching interesting, though there are adverse reactions from them as well, especially with regard to crowding (42%), lack of toilet facilities (42%) and practices of corporal punishment (26%). In terms of equity, separate analyses of parents' responses by caste and income groups do indicate the continuance of favouritism towards forward caste and APL parents by teachers.

✍ The fact that SSA has contributed to the improvement of overall education is agreed to by most teachers. At the same time, though most teachers opine that the training programmes

have improved their competence, it still has not greatly impacted the quality of teaching and knowledge transfer as is reflected in their responses to children not being able to understand the subject taught (49%) or that all of them are not able to complete their home assignments (44%) or respond to questions in the class (67%). Teachers find lack of constructive engagement from the community, especially parents also a major impediment to improvement in quality of education. ..

✍ Observations of schools in terms of their quality of infrastructure (physical, financial and human) do show availability of facilities, but the fact that there are still toilets without water (55%) and there is a continuing lack of drinking water facilities (31%), indicate that utilization of grants need to be channeled in the proper direction such as O&M. Presence of school staff due to the acceptability of multi-grade teaching is found to be adequate.

✍ Though OOSC could not be targeted in the study, familial patterns of children currently out of school (around 3%) indicate that reasons for dropout remain traditional - additional income generation, household work and sibling care. Assessment of AIE programmes show that they have helped children in mainstreaming and relocating though the lack of maintenance of proper records by the institutions impedes the reflection of success rate of these programmes.

✍ The most immediate measure for improvement is to conduct capacity building exercise of all stakeholders for successful continuation of the SSA programmes.

a. Infrastructure & Enabling Environment

1. Availability of drinking water facilities (69%) and hygienic toilet facilities (60%) is fairly good. However, regional

variations exist; northern districts fare poorer in this regard.

2. Many schools are not sensitive to the needs of the physically challenged. Only one in two schools has ramps which will enable physically challenged children to attend schools.
3. Access to and usage of grants like civil works grant, school grant and maintenance grant is quite positive. However, separate feedback from teachers and head-teachers suggest a disparity in disbursement of grant for Teaching Learning Materials (TLM). While, 88% of teachers reported receiving the grant, complete utilization of the grant has been reported by 94% of the head teachers. One needs to probe further to understand the reasons for such discrepancies.
4. Apart from the stipulated eight periods per day, most teachers (94%) also reported taking remedial classes every day. Many of them also supervise the mid-day meals in the school.

b. Retention measures

1. The Attendance in schools has been extremely good with 98% of the enrolled students attending the class on the day of observation across all classes.
2. Distribution of text books (98%), uniforms (97%) and mid day meals (95%) is found to be efficient across districts.
3. Incentives like free notebooks (41%), school bags (24%) targeted towards the backward sections of the society is not reaching all beneficiaries.
4. The issue of health card to the children is reported differently by parents (42%) and by schools (83%). Anecdotal evidences suggest that this could be a combination of a lack of awareness among parents about the health card and the medical check up and the fact that the schools would

have prepared the cards but have retained them in the schools.

c. Quality of education

5. Most children find the current teaching interesting (99%); however, interestingly a substantial proportion of teachers feel that all children in the class are not able to understand what is being taught (49%).
6. Multi-grade teaching (holding different grades in the same room) is a common practice across most schools (72%)
7. The teacher pupil ratio (1:27) is found to be within the norms (1:30), however many students do feel that the classrooms are crowded (42%).
8. Most teachers are punctual and are taking keen interest in monitoring the progress of children in class (98%); however, according to 44% of teachers, all children in the class are not able to complete their homework.
9. While it is interesting to note that most parents show an interest in monitoring their child's progress in school (86%), there seems to be a lack of awareness among parents about the remedial teaching classes with lower percentage of parents (17%) reporting their children attending these classes.

d. Capacity Building

1. Most of the training programmes related to capacity building of teachers, officials and SDMC members are well attended (70 – 80%) and appreciated by the participants. However, education officials in charge of oversight of these training programmes feel that these interventions are not enhancing the competence of teachers (25%).
2. Response to innovations like action research is found to be very scant (29%).

e. Community participation

1. Most SDMCs are taking an interest in the development of school (90%).
2. Feedback from parents suggests that membership in forums like Parent's Councils/PTAs is abysmally low (3%).
3. The participation of parents in parents' council meet is found to be poor (56%).
4. Awareness among households about SDMC (49%) and CAC (3%) is very low across districts. Again, wide regional variations are noted.

f. Support system

1. Most teachers (95%) and head teachers (97%) are satisfied with their role under SSA.
2. Feedbacks from teachers (one in two) suggest that in most of the cases the SDMCs are not constructively engaging with the school staff for the development of the school.
3. Good understanding and guidance (50 – 60%) from the senior officials towards teachers and head teachers is found across all districts; However, lack of sufficient staff within the Education and SSA departments at the district and taluk level is reported by half of the public officials interviewed (50%).

g. Equity issues

1. This study finds strong evidence of a conscious endeavour to improve girls' education in all aspects; significantly, this trend is noted across all regions.
2. About three-fourths (74%) of women SDMC members are aware and active towards school development activities.
3. On a worrying note, traditional trends of forward caste families (81%) benefiting in terms of interaction and participation at the school and community level seems to continue.
4. BPL families are getting more attention in terms of receiving the benefits from the government; however, APL families seem to be

favoured by teachers and officials in terms of involvement and sharing of information about school development activities.

h. Grievance Redress

1. Problem incidence (1.5%) reported is significantly low across all stakeholders; however; the redress rate has been poor according to teachers (38%) and head teachers (39%).
2. Lack of facilities and inadequacy of teachers in schools seems to be the main problems which need immediate attention as reported by parents.
3. Though parents find the teachers very polite and receptive to their problems, teachers find the parents' interference or lack of their participation in some cases as a main problem in discharging their duties.
4. The role of SDMC in grievance redress of teachers and parents is not found to be very strong.
5. Though corruption levels reported are low (5%), the instances are reported across all stakeholders. Also some traces of systemic corruption such as paying extra money for issues like release of various grants is reported by SDMC members and head teachers.

i. Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) Programmes

1. Attendance in AIE programs across regions and gender is good (on an average, 18 boys and 17 girls). Drop out phenomenon seems prevalent equally among boys and girls (3 boys and 4 girls who dropped out of school during the mainstreaming).
2. Financial constraints within the family seem to be the important reason for children dropping out of school as reported by parents. For girls apart from these reasons, household work and sibling care also act as reasons for dropping out from school.

3. Outreach of SSA's handbook (Parihara Bodana Kaipidi) to teachers is very good (91%).
 4. Most teachers (90%) and head teachers (58%) underwent the training for Chinnara Angala and all of them were satisfied with the training and feel it enhanced their skills in interactive teaching.
 5. Though there is a lot of emphasis by SSA on teaching aids and learning material and teachers claimed to use them a lot during the interviews, availability and use of these aids was found to be rather deficient during observations / case study research.
 6. Feedback on mandatory record keeping reflects mixed feedback. While, the profile of every student is maintained well in most centres (98%), however the record keeping of rejoining of these students to regular schools is very poor (39%). In the absence of such records, it is hard to conduct an objective assessment of the progress and effectiveness of AIE programmes.
 7. Many SDMC members are working towards increasing enrolment and ensuring regular attendance in schools (54%) by motivating parents to send their children to schools (48%).
 8. Most head teachers (86%) feel that the mainstreaming of children has gone up as an impact of SSA initiatives
2. Findings from the study of AIE programmes and Case study research – The detailed findings from the study of 79 AIE centres across four districts and the case study in two districts of Karnataka was shared with SSA in the form of Interim report.
 3. Key findings from the study of 229 regular schools – the key outcomes from the study of 229 schools and interviews with all the stakeholders along with the study of AIE centres was shared in the form of draft final report
 4. Presentation of key findings and action areas – A detailed presentation to all the heads of the departments within SSA and the Public Instructions department of Government of Karnataka was made in the month of April 2009 which was followed by another brief presentation to the Executive Committee of SSA in the month of June 2009 to share the findings from the study and solicit their feed back.

Public Dissemination

To engage the larger public and specific interested stakeholders, the findings and pointers from this pioneering study will be shared and discussed in multiple fora.

VII. DISSEMINATION & OUTREACH

Dissemination within SSA

Five rounds of sharing of findings have been done so far with SSA starting from the inception report till the submission of final report.

1. Sampling and data collection instruments – A detailed sampling plan and data collection instruments and first set of experiences from the field during the field work were shared with SSA in the form of