SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT 2009
RESOURCE MATERIAL FOR SMC TRAINING

Dayaram

BOOK ONE
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

AMERICAN INDIA FOUNDATION
C-17 Green Park Extension
New Delhi 110016
T: +91.11.4611.8888
F: +91.11.4611.8890
www.AIF.org
facebook.com/AIFoundation
Twitter: @AIFtweets
youtube.com/AIFoundation

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT 2009
Resource Material for SMC Training

Edited by Ashutosh Tosaria & Nandita Singh
Designed by Chand Nirankari

PHOTO CREDITS:
Prashant Panjiar: Cover/Back Cover, Pages 3, 6, 10-11, 14-15, 19, 32-33, 36-37, 39, 48-49, 51
Arjun Sanyal: Pages 20-21, 22-23, 40, 42-43
Smita: Pages 4-5
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India has made progress in many aspects which is being acknowledged worldwide. Today, India’s economy is among the fastest growing economies of the world even when the developed world is faced with severe recession, leading to unprecedented unemployment. India’s IT industry boom and its technical knowhow in this area have placed India in a unique position in the world. Its citizens are being viewed with respect and admiration. However it’s progress on basic education leaves a lot to be desired.

India is also a country of young people. More than 50% of its population being young, places India in a very advantageous position. It can clearly avail of the demographic dividend. But this demographic dividend may turn into liability unless education and skill levels of its youth are significantly improved. One of the key challenges is to have growth with equity and democracy without which the current growth becomes unsustainable. Ensuring good quality education for its population particularly up to completion of secondary school is an indispensible step in the direction of bringing equity and enhancing democracy.

It is in this context that the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, 2009 (RTE Act) is a landmark legislation. Many provisions have been made in the Act to ensure quality education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years. Specific provisions have been made for democratization of schools and for parents and local communities to play their due roles in shaping and running of the schools in the form of School Management Committees (SMC) and preparation of School Development Plan. For communities to be able to effectively play that role, they need to be oriented/ trained and supported. To engage with the school system, members of community need to develop technical skills like collection of relevant information, analyzing it and finally designing appropriate interventions, basing on norms set in the RTE Act.

It is heartening to note that AIF along with its partner NGOs undertook the task of training SMCs, youth, members of Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) functionaries, so that they could play effective roles in realizing the goals of RTE in their respective locations. As the document mentions, this has resulted into unleashing of vibrant civil society actions on the ground which is beginning to shape the future of education in hundreds of these villages in remote districts of Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra and Bihar. I have had an opportunity to personally witness these alert and active local communities in Kutch, Gujarat, one of these geographies.

The current document which was evolved in the process of organizing a series of orientations for the NGO partners of the AIF is a significant development. This document deals with the issues like; key provisions of the RTE Act, roles and responsibilities of the SMC, the unique position in which SMCs are to initiate reform in the schools, understanding the school system, understanding teachers and preparation of School Development Plan and social audit of schools and specially of children’s learning.

Civil Society organizations including youth, women’s groups and PRI members, who are working to change the state of education in their respective areas will find this document particularly useful. This document should be disseminated widely among the practitioners and policymakers.

Shantha Sinha
Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
September 2011
INTRODUCTION

The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act) 2009 was passed by the Parliament in August 2009. After receiving Presidential assent, it was notified for implementation from April 1, 2010.

The RTE Act 2009 has generated a lot of debate. While on the one end, it has been opposed and condemned as a design of the neo-liberal state to sabotage school education further, on the other end it has been sighted as the most revolutionary Act. However, both positions are far from reality. While the first position leads to an all out opposition of the Act and confrontation with the Government, the second position may also lead to inaction and illusion about the real intention and capacity of the current Indian state. Either of the two positions can cause harm to the cause of mass education.

We are of the view that in spite of its limitations, some provisions of the RTE Act like provision for better infrastructure, improved Pupil Teacher Ratio and the enhanced role of School Management Committee (SMC), if utilized properly, have the potential of revitalizing the almost defunct government schools that cater to the common people in the country. These provisions can be realized through concerted civil society interventions and constructive engagement with the governments at the centre and the state levels.

Government school system in India caters to children living in villages and small towns, which is a fairly large proportion of the Indian population. It consists of 77 percent of our country’s total population of 860 million. The extremely poor quality of education available to them ensures that a large majority of India’s children continue to be far behind. One of the main reasons, for such a dismal state of our public system of schools is that the local communities have not been able to assert themselves and effect desirable changes.

It is ironical that education can be a great leveler and also be a means to perpetuate the existing social divide. Great hierarchy in schooling provisions exist in India. Equality of opportunity in terms of accessing school, have remained at best a political rhetoric. India’s middle class who can afford to pay for their children’s education opting for sending their children to high fee paying private schools and for rest of the masses poorly equipped barely functioning government schools remain the sole option. The social and economic divide that exists in society is reflected in access to schools as well.

The government run school system is heterogeneous and has large variety within it. On the one hand, we have single teacher, building less multi-grade EGS schools and on the other, a class of comfortably funded - Central Schools and Navodaya Vidyalayas which target a limited set of children (of government employees). Amongst these lie majority of India’s schools which continue to be managed and funded by the government and dot the rural landscape of India.

Under the RTE Act 2009, parents have been entrusted with certain powers through the SMC elected by them; proper exercise of the same can initiate a process of improving schools. For that to get actualized, the community at large and the SMC members in particular have to be supported through training and handholding. They have to be made aware of the provisions of the RTE Act, the roles, composition and the process of formation of the SMCs.

1 National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (Ministry of Small Scale Industries, Government of India) (NCEUS 2009)

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION MATTERS

The school has to be viewed as a social organization, organically linked to the community. Community must have an effective say in the management of the school. Over the years, an almost complete disappearance of this space for the local community in managing schools, has significantly contributed towards the decline in the school system. Under the RTE Act 2009, there is an attempt to restore this legitimate space, to the community. This is an opportunity, we must not lose.

As a matter of priority, the essential components of a good school need to be understood, especially by the parents. Thus, understanding the child learning processes, teacher child relationships, role of the school management, issues that schools face and role of SMC in taking schools out of this present mess, etc, are some crucial issues.

In this context, skills to engage with schools at the local level as well as at the level of the system, acquire great significance for parents. A sustained dialogue that facilitates learning and meaningful action on the part of parents has to continue. A continuous support and handholding of the SMC and the local community rather than one or two training programs thus, becomes imperative.

Engaging in a dialogue is a delicate and complex task. Mutual trust is a pre requisite for dialogue between concerned parties. Dialogue with the local community presumes having faith in their abilities. Very often this trust is missing. Development facilitators, often, lack this confidence in the ability of the community and resort to bypassing the participatory processes.

ALF, realizing the opportunity thrown up by the RTE Act 2009, decided to train its NGO partners working in the states of Gujarat, Odisha, Bihar and Maharashtra. In turn these NGOs have undertaken the tasks of community mobilization on the issue of Right to Education, and have helped parents to form SMCs. They have undertaken the tasks of training SMC members, so that they can play effective roles in realizing the goals of RTE in their respective locations. The SMCs have been trained in preparing School Development Plans. They have also helped to orient youth. Members of the women’s Self Help Groups (SHGs) and the Panchayati Raj institutions (PRI) representatives are also making significant contributions to improve school education in their respective geographical locations.

As result of these efforts, one can witness vibrant civil society action on the ground. This is beginning to shape the future of education in hundreds of villages in these states.

The current document evolved in the process of organizing a series of orientations for the NGO partners of the American India Foundation, on RTE Act 2009. Civil Society Organizations including youth, women’s groups and PRI members, who are working to change the state of education in their respective areas will find this document particularly useful.
How efficiently is our Public System of Education Performing? The Global Monitoring Report (2007) ranks India a low 100 out of the 125 countries on the Education for All (EFA) Development Index, based upon progress related to universal primary education, adult literacy, gender parity and the quality of education.

ACCESS TO SCHOOLING

Physical access has improved for most. Almost all habitations/villages having a primary school facility within 1 km and 78% have an upper primary facility within a 3 km radius. But a sizeable number of children continue to find difficulty in accessing schools for variety of social and school related reasons.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

In India, 8.4% schools are still single teacher schools. About 10% schools still do not have drinking water facility. 46% schools do not have toilet facilities. Only 50% schools have separate toilets for girls. About 46% schools have Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) above 35 and 3.26% schools have PTR above 100. States with very high PTR are Bihar 87.67, Jharkhand 69.81, Haryana 58.67 and Madhya Pradesh 55.62.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is the status of schooling in India in terms of important parameters like access, infrastructure, learning, etc?
- Is the school system efficiently delivering quality education?

IN THIS SECTION

- Education statistics- Access, Infrastructure, Learning, Retention etc.
- Quality and efficiency of school system
COVERAGE WITHIN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) for primary is 98.28 and for Upper Primary classes, it is as low as 58.29. This means only 58 out of hundred in the appropriate age group are in Upper Primary Schools. Or in other words, 42% children of the Upper Primary age group are out of school. Some of the states having NER at primary level much below the national average are, Punjab 63.05%, Andhra Pradesh 71%. Similarly, states having NER at upper primary levels significantly lower than the national average are Gujarat 42.2%, Uttar Pradesh 45.38%, Bihar 48.85% and Haryana 53.71%. This shows that a very large number of children, of the appropriate age group, still remain out of school.

How do we compare with the other countries? China has achieved 9 years of universal schooling. The GER for higher education for India is below 15, against about 30 for China and above 75 for the USA.

PARTICIPATION (STUDENT ATTENDANCE)

Ensuring regular participation of children in school remains a critical issue. Absenteeism, among certain categories of children, remains high. Among the many reasons for absenteeism, unfriendly attitude of teachers towards children and unattractive teaching learning processes top the list. The Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) community and school surveys (2007), carried out in 36 villages, from the three clusters of Rewa and Dindon in Madhya Pradesh and Rajnandgaon in Chhattisgarh, show that student absenteeism is rampant. On the day of the field visit, absenteeism in these clusters of schools ranged from 22% to 47%. And if one were to count the attendance after distribution of the Mid Day Meal (MDM) in schools, it would have dropped even further. Since there exists a very high correlation between attendance and learning achievement, low learning levels in schools, with such high absenteeism, is but obvious.

SURVIVAL RATE AT PRIMARY LEVEL

Survival rate at primary level grade I to V is 78%. National level data reveals that out of every 100 children who enroll in grade I, only 78 are able to complete grade V. In other words 22 out of hundred children, drop out of school before completing even the primary cycle. But many states have primary survival rate much below the national average. Among the big states, Bihar has a rate as low as 58%, Jharkhand 62% followed by Rajasthan at 63%.

A combination of repetition and dropout rates, at the primary level, too, illustrates the existing inefficiencies in the system. Research indicates that the high number of drop-outs and cases of repetition are largely due to the poor functioning of schools.

In the first year of primary school alone, repetition and drop-out rates, together, total nearly 20%. By Grade VIII, 35% of students have dropped out and by Grade X, the drop-out rate has reached 66%. Overall, the female drop-out rates are higher than that of boys, with only 47% of girls being enrolled in secondary schools as opposed to 59% of boys. Inequities persist for Muslim minorities and scheduled castes and tribes. All of this points to poor transitions and continuity for learners.

LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

Learning achievement in schools remains disturbingly low for the vast majority of students. Among those who stay in schools even for five years, the learning levels are abysmally low. In fact, a substantial proportion of student population does not even acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. Poor learning, in early stages, is seen as the main stumbling block for progress of children, through the grades as well as the transition to upper primary and thereafter to secondary stages of schooling.

Assessment Survey Evaluation Research (ASER) report, 2010, shows that in grade V, 21% children are illiterate, 25% can read only grade I text. Similarly in grade VIII again about 6% children are illiterate and 11% children can read only grade I level texts. These key indicators reflect the poor health of our school system.

The CREATE research (NUEPA and University of Sussex, UK, 2010) found that the situation on learning levels was not encouraging as the mean scores (41 in Hindi and 49 in Math), particularly in Hindi, were poor. It noted that the poor performance in the first language was a cause for concern as it would seriously affect reading and learning capabilities of the children as they progressed through education.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality and relevance of education remains problematic. Irregular attendance of the teachers, overcrowded classrooms, ineffective teaching-learning processes, an inappropriate curriculum and dilapidated school buildings are some key issues in education. The absence of basic facilities and school infrastructure (e.g. separate toilets for girls, availability of water) can be problematic.

In addition, teachers tend to come from areas distant from their place of work. Poor teacher motivation and absenteeism, harsh/disinterested teaching styles, lack of appropriate training and follow-up support for teachers, irrelevant curriculum and little to no connection between teachers and the parents/community who live around the school, are all critical underlying issues and often combined to the detriment of the educational system.

Access, efficiency and quality issues are far more problematic for marginalised communities (e.g. SC/ST, Muslim minorities, children living in remote rural areas or crowded urban slums, scheduled castes and tribes, girls, etc.)

PRIVATE PROVISION AND PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

There is growing preference for private schools among parents. This trend is largely due to inefficient functioning of the government schools. This growing range of non-state education offerings are of differing quality and orientation (non-formal schools, bridge courses, community-schools, low-cost private schools, etc) and are supported by hundreds of NGOs and family trusts as well as by individuals or groups. While some are doing good work, many offer very substandard quality of education. Parents are lured to them because these function regularly, unlike government schools. These also promise to teach English and provide good quality education. Teachers in these low cost rural/urban private schools, often, lack requisite qualifications and are poorly paid.
The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 was passed by the Parliament in August 2009, and after receiving Presidential assent, it was notified for implementation from April 1, 2010. Introduced through the 86th amendment, the RTE Act provides the children of India, in the age group 6 to 14 years, a **fundamental right to free and compulsory education**.

This is a historic decision for the education of the children of India. Though the RTE existed as a part of the directive principles of State Policy under Article 45 of the Constitution, it was not enforceable. For the first time in the history of India this right has been made enforceable by putting it under Article 21. Thus the right to education has been accorded the same legal status as the right to life as provided by Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. This act provides for 8 years of elementary education in an age appropriate classroom in the vicinity of his/her neighborhood for every child in the age group of 6-14 years.

With the enactment of RTE Act, India joins the league of over 130 countries that have legal guarantees to provide free and compulsory education to children. According to the UNESCO’s ‘Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010’, 135 countries have constitutional provisions for free and non-discriminatory education for all. It also cited a 2005 World Bank survey, which stated that only 13 countries impart primary education totally free of cost. In majority of the countries, some direct costs have been reported though no tuition fees are charged.
SOME OF THE KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ACT ARE:

- Any cost that prevents a child from accessing school will be borne by the State which shall have the responsibility of enrolling the child, as well as ensuring attendance and completion of 8 years of schooling.
- No child shall be denied admission for want of documents; no child shall be turned away if the admission cycle in the school is over and no child shall be asked to take an admission test.
- Children with disabilities will also be educated in the mainstream schools.
- All schools will have to prescribe to norms and standards laid out in the Act. No school that does not fulfill these standards, within 3 years, will be allowed to function.
- No school or person shall, while admitting a child, collect any capitation fee and subject the child or his/ her parents or guardian to any screening procedure. There is a provision for heavy penalty for demanding capitation fee and screening.
- No child should be subjected to physical punishment and mental harassment.
- Children in every habitation will have access to primary school within a walking distance of one kilometer and to Upper primary schools within 3km. For children in hilly, forested and difficult terrain, if schools are not possible within these distances there will be provision of hostels and transport, to ensure access to schooling for them.
- No child will be detained in any grade and no child will be expelled from the school, unless she/he completes 8 year schooling.
- Schools will have adequate number of teachers and classrooms – there is a provision for a teacher for every 30 children, a classroom for every teacher and a separate room for the Head master.
- No teacher shall be deployed for any non-educational purpose other than the decennial population census, disaster relief duties or duties related to election of the local authority, or the state Legislature or the Parliament, as the case may be.
- No teacher shall engage herself/himself in private tuitions and private teaching activity.
- Schools will have separate toilets for girls and boys.
- Schools will have a boundary wall, library and kitchen sheds as well.
- Local governments and communities have been vested with adequate powers to plan, monitor and manage their schools.
- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been mandated to monitor the implementation of this historic Right.
- A special Division within NCPCR will undertake this huge and important task in the coming months and years.
- NCPCR has also invited civil society groups, students, teachers, administrators, artists, writers, government personnel, legislators, members of the judiciary and all other stakeholders to join hands and work together to build a movement to ensure that every child of this country is in school and is enabled to get, at least, 8 years of quality education.

RESOURCES

- Right to Education Act
- RTE Model Rules

TIPS FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

1. Give handouts on RTE to the participants and ask them to go over the salient provisions, in groups.
2. Have group discussions about features of RTE and how it can help the local schools as well as the local community.

KEY CONCERNS RAISED ABOUT THE RTE ACT

1. Lack of commitment towards common school system for all children. It legalizes hierarchy of schooling provisions thereby does it not support perpetuating social inequality?
2. How are the students going to get promoted if there will be no examination till grade VIII?
3. Since no child can be detained as per RTE directives, would it not lead to a compromise with the quality of education?
4. What are the pitfalls of an absence of accountability for the schools? How is this to be dealt with?
5. If the SMC prepares a plan as per the guidelines, and the authorities do not honour the same or they do not provide the requisite funding and other support for implementation, and do not respond in a timely manner, what can an SMC do? Who can they approach?
6. How will the SDPs, prepared by various schools, be aggregated? And at what level of aggregation will the local authorities respond? In case a few schools in a block or a district prepare their SDPs while others don’t, will they get a response from the authorities? If not then will this not de-motivate those SMCs and communities that are working sincerely?
7. If private schools do not implement the provision of 25% admission for children from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) how its enforcement is ensured?

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR APPROACH TO THESE ISSUES?

No-examination policy can be an opportunity. Examinations, as being conducted currently, are not very favorable to the learning process. They build stress, lead to anxiety and boredom, and also foster a culture of rote learning. Examinations are a hindrance in developing a genuine learning culture. ‘No-examination’ system can help eliminate the ill effects of an exam-oriented system. It can change the classroom dynamics in favour of more joyful learning experiences. Absence of examinations does not mean absence of assessment of children’s progress. In fact, the teacher needs to make a regular assessment of each and every child’s progress, and identify learning difficulties so as to plan and facilitate better learning.
Transparent and non-threatening ways of evaluating children’s progress are possible. There are many such examples available. Such assessment practices can also enable social or community audit of children’s learning while ensuring accountability of schools towards parents and the local community.

It is necessary that parents be made aware of the age wise /grade curricular targets, which are more or less universal in nature, so that parents can begin to monitor whether their child’s learning levels are appropriate to his / her age or not. Specifying learning outcomes beforehand is important. In addition, parents and community could contribute in the process of assessing learning outcomes. It is quite possible to see how well children are able to write texts, or do mathematical calculations as well as note any improvement in their overall articulation and behaviour.

Learning is intrinsic to the child’s nature. Thus, if children are regular in school and their learning process is organized properly, they will certainly learn. What one needs to ensure is a regular participation and attendance in schools and an efficient monitoring of their learning, using social audit mechanisms.

National Council for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been entrusted the task of monitoring the progress of implementation of RTE and submit an annual report to the Parliament on the same. The composition and role of SMC is an important aspect of the RTE. Civil society organizations, working at different levels, have a role to ensure that SMC occupies an important place in monitoring of the RTE. Another important step towards equity is the reservation of 25% seats in the private schools for underprivileged children. This has been probably the most contentious issue in the RTE Act. Though the matter is sub judice but there has been no stay on its implementation. State Councils for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) can also be contacted for ensuring that this provision is not made irrelevant by the private providers. But more important is to mobilize public opinion in favour of this provision.
SMC has a very crucial role in actualizing the goals of RTE. It has tremendous potential to transform the existing system of education, characterized by cynicism and a defeatist outlook of the system functionaries and stakeholders, including teachers and parents. Through its positive action and a constructive dialogue with other stakeholders the SMC can work towards reinstating a well functioning school system. Consistency of positive actions by SMC will change the dynamics and solutions will begin to take shape, first at local levels and then at the larger systemic levels.

All government, government aided and special category schools shall have to constitute SMCs as per Section 21 of the RTE Act. Since private schools are already mandated to have management committees on the basis of their trust/society registrations, they are not covered by Section 21. A proposed amendment makes the SMC an advisory, rather than statutory, body for schools covered under Article 29 and 30 of the constitution (minority schools).

PARENTS CAN BE THE CHANGE LEADERS

Parents and children are the primary stakeholders of an education system and it is they who bear the brunt of the faulting school system. They need to be given opportunities and support to bring about a change in the education system. Our role is to make them realize that they hold the powerful key to initiate the process of reversing the decline in schools, through their constructive and collective engagements with the school and other stakeholders.
Community members, especially parents, can contribute in the following respects:

- Support in preparing school development plan and implementation of the same
- Bridge the distance between the school and block/district authorities by representing the school at various platforms
- Volunteer to spend time with children in schools and teach variety of skills
- Help teachers perform their job better by supporting them in material development, supporting teachers in distribution of materials to groups, helping children to learn various crafts, musical instruments and other skills available in the community etc.
- Work as support teachers when teacher goes on leave

Parents of Shivhari village in Maharashtra realized that their SMC was disbanded by the Head Master sneakily. Led by the SMC President, himself a parent, the SMC and some other community members filed an RTI application with the Block Education Officer to check the names of original SMC members submitted earlier. They understood that the Headmaster had modified the official sheet and changed names of SMC members elected by the community. They followed up the case with the BEO and made sure that the HM is reprimanded and that the original SMC is reinstated.

(An experience from Prajayatna, the Citizen’s Initiative on Elementary Education in Karnataka)
SUPPORTING TEACHERS

Teachers, at one level have been completely co-opted in a system of education which is definitely not pro-people in its character and on the other level they face a serious alienation within the system because of their lowest position in the bureaucratic hierarchy. On a daily basis they face rejection and disrespect. They are either defensive and refuse to accept the current decline or put the blame on parents, children and the system and bureaucracy for this sorry state of affairs in school. They do not experience any challenge and excitement in their work.

Teachers need to be helped to experience a new relationship with the children, school and the local community. The whole equation and principles of relationship has to be altered. The new relationship has to be based on the power of mutual trust. The teacher needs to experience the joys of learning, discovery and success. It is only then that a teacher will be able to appreciate the superiority of this over the control based relationship which s/he inherits from the system and the society as a whole and transfers it to the classroom and children. To make them experience this new powerful relationship is an important task and challenge before anyone who wants to change the classroom and the school system.

Teachers can experience the power of this new relationship in our Learning Enhancement Programme (LEP) classes and in our seasonal hostels. Teachers in the government schools are able to notice changes in the learning levels, behavior and overall confidence level of students of LEP classes and in our seasonal hostels. Teachers in the government schools are able to notice changes in the learning levels, behavior and overall confidence level of students of LEP classes and in our seasonal hostels. Many have started getting curious about this change in the most marginalized children who hitherto were non-performing, silent and almost excluded, reflecting very low self confidence. This is an opportunity for us to enter into a dialogue with these teachers for changing classrooms in all respects.

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Currently a school is viewed as an alien body, owned by the government and that the common people / parents have no say in its functioning. This perception needs to be corrected. School should be viewed as one of the most important institutions of society. School and society have to be organically linked since both play important roles in the development of the child. For community members to effectively participate in supporting schools and play a catalytic role in improving the education of their children, they need to be sensitized about the following:

• That the implementation of RTE requires a comprehensive understanding of the system and the reasons for its inefficiency. That SMC members (and parents) are in a unique position to initiate a turnaround in the current situation.
• They will be able to fulfill this historic role only by equipping themselves with a sound knowledge of governance. It is imperative to act or intervene from an organised authoritative position. To play the game, the rules of the game have to be understood.
• They must know about the system of governance of public education - how the schools should function; how the education in the schools should be organised; where the funds come from; who is responsible for what; who to be approached for which problem, and so on.
• They must also know about; classroom learning, the relationship of school and the society.

RESOURCES

- Right to Education Act
- State RTE Rules
- Relevant Government Orders

TIPS FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

Critical questions to be addressed in the training of SMC members. Stress on quality, equity and genuine acquisition of literacy. This is the spirit of RTE. Provisions are directives, we need to understand the philosophy behind the Act.

• What are the roles of SMC?
• What tools and mechanisms will it use to perform its roles?
• What kind of capacity building exercises would it require?
COMPOSITION OF THE SMC

Keeping in view the heterogeneous nature of the community and the power relations that exist, the Act has tried to ensure representation of different segments of the community in the SMC, especially earmarking fifty percent seats for women.

In the Central Model Rules, the composition suggested is as follows:
- Three fourth (75%) members of the SMC from the parents/guardians. From them 50% will be women. Weaker sections will be represented in the SMC in proportion to their population in the village.
- Rest one fourth (25%) will be as; 1/3rd local authorities; 1/3rd school teachers; 1/3rd academicians/students

FORMATION OF SMC

The process of constituting SMC could be as follows:

1. General Body (GB) meeting of parents/guardians - all parents/guardians of children studying in the school will constitute the membership of the GB of the SMC.
2. The GB members will elect representation of parents as per RTE norms for the executive committee of the SMC as per the local situation. Experience shows that the women’s representation in bodies such as the SMC tends to get treated as tokenism, because of a lack of appreciation in the bureaucracy about the significant roles women are capable of playing on development issues - in this case children’s education. Gender stereotyping which is widely prevalent, very often works against any serious effort of giving this important space for women. This needs to be prevented at all costs.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE FORMATION OF SMC

1. Participation of women: The RTE Act very clearly designates 50% place for mothers among the elected members. The positive impact of women’s participation is clearly visible at the grassroots levels, in their participation in Panchayats and Self Help Groups. It is also desired to encourage women to take leadership of the SMC. Therefore it will be desirable that least one woman should be selected at the level of President or vice President of the SMC as per the local situation. Experience shows that the women’s representation in bodies such as the SMC tends to get treated as tokenism, because of a lack of appreciation in the bureaucracy about the significant roles women are capable of playing on development issues - in this case children’s education. Gender stereotyping which is widely prevalent, very often works against any serious effort of giving this important space for women. This needs to be prevented at all costs.

2. Student nominee: The spirit of including a student in SMC is very important. Representation of children has to be made mandatory as the right of children to participate is one of the key rights in the UN Child Rights Charter. The spirit of RTE Act is to foster a child-centric approach, thus the participation of a child would enhance child-sensitive culture and would also help the SMC to understand the views and experiences of children about the situations in school and also their aspirations.

3. Other members of SMC: While ensuring the selection from the weaker sections, it is crucial that the representation of the migrant gamilies is also ensured. In RTE the concern of migrants is outlined. Currently, distress migration from villages is on the rise. Thus education for a lot of children is getting disrupted and many are missing it completely.

The representation of NGOs and CBOs is important. Their experience of community mobilization, capacity building, and facilitating democratic processes would be useful.

4. Size of SMC: The size of SMC is not clearly specified in the Central Model Rules. It is important that SMC be of a manageable size. In Rajasthan the number of members suggested is 15, in Maharashtra it is between 12 and 16. Ideally the number of the members in SMC should be odd to provide for option of voting in case of conflict.

5. Office bearers: The Office Bearers suggested in Central Model Rules are as follows:
   a. Selection of the President and Vice President to be from among Parents.
   b. Convener/Secretary, suggested by the School, could be either the Headmaster or a teacher. Convener will bear the overall responsibility of providing administrative support to the SMC. S/He must ensure the notification of the SMC formation, and provide linkages with the government departments.

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1. General Body (GB) meeting of parents/guardians - all parents/guardians of children studying in the school will constitute the membership of the GB of the SMC.
2. The GB members will elect representation of parents as per RTE norms for the executive committee of the SMC, by consensus or, if needed, by voting.
3. Teachers and other members (1/3rd of the SMC) along with the elected members from the parents will constitute the Executive Committee of the SMC.
4. In turn they will elect office bearers of the SMC as per norms specified in the Act.
5. The SMC can also constitute sub-committees including members from the GB for specific functions, and all these committees would be responsible towards the GB of the SMC.

In Odisha, government notification initially ignored women’s 50% representation in the SMC. It was only after the intervention from AIF partner NGO Lokadrusti that the Government of Odisha issued a second circular and corrected this distortion in the representation. Almost without any exception, women SHG members have shown tremendous interests in school related processes.
ents, especially mothers, will pave the way for democratic and effective functioning of the SMCs.

Training and orientation to the SMC members and adequate sensitization and mobilization of parents are also required. Provision of effective role in ensuring proper functioning of the SMC. A general observation is that mothers express more concern and are better informed about their children's education. Thus, it is necessary that ground work be undertaken with utmost seriousness, towards sensitizing the larger community of parents with respect to the provisions of RTE, the roles and responsibilities of the SMC, and also their accountability towards the GB.

The quality of the SMC will directly depend on the level and quality of the participation of parents. Therefore, it is necessary that ground work be undertaken, with utmost seriousness, towards sensitizing the larger community of parents with respect to the provisions of RTE, the roles and responsibilities of the SMC, and also their accountability towards the GB. Village youth and women (in particular SHGs, wherever they exist) need to be especially organized and trained to play an effective role in ensuring proper functioning of the SMC. A general observation is that mothers express more concern and are better informed about their children's education. Provision of effective training and orientation to the SMC members and adequate sensitization and mobilization of parents, especially mothers, will pave the way for democratic and effective functioning of the SMCs.

**THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE ENGAGING COMMUNITY FOR SMC FORMATION**

1. In some villages, seasonal migration is quite high and a significant number of families that migrate are absent from the villages for a large part of the year. Therefore it is important that the General Body meeting of SMC be scheduled when most of the people are in villages, i.e. the period between May to September.

2. Community awareness is essential while forming SMC. The outcome of the awareness campaign should lead to community/all parents becoming aware about the roles of the SMC and the process of its formation.

3. Participation of women and young adults is to be encouraged. To ensure this spirit, some steps are needed to facilitate women's participation. Separate meetings are to be organized at a time convenient for women. Gender sensitization training is to be organized for men.

4. To facilitate the representation of children, priority is to be given, to include a student in SMC as a member. Participation of the girl child should be encouraged. The student can be linked to Balsabha or Bal Sansad process, in his/her respective school.

5. The SMC members have to be elected by the parents of children who are enrolled in the school and the committee should be accountable to the GB of parents. There should be at least two meetings of the GB, every year, in which SMC should share its progress. The SMC report has to be approved by the GB. This process needs to be institutionalized.

**SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FORMATION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES**

- There should not be too many sub-committees.
- Same members of SMC should not be repeated in too many sub-committees.
- The number of members of each sub-committee should be limited to 3 - 5, depending on the workload and complexity of tasks.
- At least one member of each sub-committee should be a woman.
- School Development Planning responsibility should be shared across all sub-committees as per their area of work.
- It should be acknowledged that some of the planning tasks are quite technical. Therefore the different sub-committees should have people with the skill sets required for working on these committees, and such individuals should be carefully identified and supported.

Experience from the AIF field areas of Gujarat, Orissa, Bihar and Maharashtra suggests that supported by the NGO partners, a large number of educated youth and adolescents are taking an active role in the entire process of SMC formation, especially in the preparation of School Development Plans. They are quick to acquire planning skills which involve calculations and analysis, and have abundant energy and willingness to engage. Such individuals can take on responsibilities, very effectively, in various sub-committees.

**RESOURCES**

- Right to Education Act
- State RTE Rules
- Relevant Government Orders

**TIPS FOR RESOURCE PERSONS**

1. Discuss with participants how VECs were composed, earlier, in their villages and how is the composition of an SMC different in the present times.

2. Ask participants to discuss, in groups, the dis/advantages of SMC composition, keeping in mind the local specifics/situations.

3. Discuss with participants how/when SMC meetings should be organized to achieve best results.

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In Maharashtra and Orissa - where a government notification was issued for SMC formation, it was noticed that a democratic process of consultation with the parents was ignored in the formation of the SMC. It was evident from field reports and field visits that Head Masters had tried to pick and choose SMC members as per their convenience. But, since AIF supported NGOs have undertaken a mass public awareness programme on RTE including SMC formation processes, its’ composition and roles, the community objected to such a practice and forced the local administration to correct the errors. These incidents clearly reflect that if parents are made aware and are supported, they are capable and willing to participate in the functioning of schools. These experiences suggest, without any ambiguity, that a great potential in changing the accountability framework lies in the provision of SMCs under the Act.

It is also to be noted that the concept of community participation in education is not completely new. The provision for community’s role in the form of VEC and SDC existed in the SSA and DPEP as well. Various researches by government and non-government agencies on the effectiveness of these bodies brought to light that they were not able to discharge their expected functions. It was found across states, that many members were not aware of their membership of any such committees, let alone their roles and their powers. Some who were aware could not exercise their powers because of the non-facilitative, hostile environment and a lack of training. In many cases these committees were packed with those whose children were not enrolled in those schools. All this experience brings to the fore, the importance of proper composition and representation in such a body during the process of formation and the importance of training and handholding.

It is also important to note that Village Education Committees( VECs)/ School Development Committees(SDCs) existing earlier to RTE Act 2009 were not statutory provisions. In most cases, they were a result of administrative orders.

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TRAINING & ORIENTATION OF SMC

Following issues need to be covered while training SMC members:

- Key provisions of the RTE Act 2009.
- Roles of SMC and the opportunity parents have, to improve the functioning of their schools.
- Role of parents in School Management Committee:
- Preparing School Development Plan, generating information using the school records,
  School Mapping and Focus Group Discussion
- Role of SMC in financial management,
- Monitoring role and strategy for public monitoring of participation, continuation, promotion, completion and learning;
- Understanding the current situation of the school and the school system – Including quality aspects, quality benchmark, current situation of schools in terms of enrollment, participation, retention, promotion and learning achievement.
- Relationship between the teacher and the community.
- Relationship of SMC with the local authority.
- Methods of creating an educational data base and a monitoring tool.
- Specific training for working groups.
- Issues of child rights.

TRAINING METHODS

Role of resource team- It is very important that the training starts on the right note, with the resource team clearly laying down the expectations from the participants and how the training can help them. They should also give an overview of what is to be discussed and explain the session themes in detail. The resource team should be careful in restricting itself to overview and facilitate participants to discuss ideas, with enough time on their hands.

Group work- This being a training that expects the participants to work on concrete areas, it is important to give them space to understand and plan their work. The participants who have already received some training could be asked to distribute themselves across all groups. At the beginning of each group work session, the resource team should communicate what is expected from the group at the end of the exercise. They should also make sure that the required material, like RTE handouts (if needed), chart papers, sketch pens etc. are available to each group. As the exercise is in progress, the resource team could move around the room, looking at what each group is doing and encourage the silent members to participate. They should refrain from doing the work themselves and only support the group, that too minimally.

Presentation- Each group work session should be followed by a presentation of the salient points that were discussed and sharing of plan, action points drawn. The resource team should invite each member of the group, to be a part of the presentation. The presenters should get adequate time to articulate their thoughts. This might need encouragement from the resource team.

Discussions- Each presentation should be followed by a question-answer session. Here, the role of the resource team is important, as it has to moderate the discussion and ensure healthy participation from as many people as possible. The resource team could themselves, or even invite one of the participants to, summarize the discussion and share the important action points.

Things to keep in mind:
- There should be separate detailed training for members of the sub groups on specific themes.
- The expectations from the participants need to be communicated clearly and reinforced during the training;
- Participants should be given space to freely share their opinions and local knowledge pertinent to the issues being discussed.
- The training should be documented by members of the resource team.
- The schedule should not be packed and must allow some buffer time to allow discussions to lead to logical conclusions.

A TRAINING ON SDP PREPARATION COULD LOOK LIKE THIS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>SUB-ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction of participants (to cover their roles in SMC &amp; SHG) Objective of the training</td>
<td>Participants understand the objectives of the program and what is expected from them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Provisions of RTE Act 2009</td>
<td>Introduction to the Act &amp; Group work - read and discuss the handouts on RTE</td>
<td>Participants discuss and share opinions on RTE. They also articulate the Act in their own words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>School Development Planning</td>
<td>Introduction to SDP &amp; Group work - each group looks at different aspects of SDP: Social mapping, Village survey, School infra. mapping, RTE norms Presentation - each group presents its understanding of RTE</td>
<td>Participants understand the planning process for SDP- processes and steps involved, data collection, use of formats, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preparation of demo plan</td>
<td>Overview on Data collection, data analysis &amp; sequencing, Group work - SDP writing, Presentation SDPs</td>
<td>Participants develop a demo SDP by analyzing the data provided to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Role of participants in spreading the RTE awareness, strengthening SMCs</td>
<td>Overview of RTE awareness plan in villages (including monitoring mechanism/tools) Group work - each group will discuss the expansion plan for their respective areas Preparation of action plan</td>
<td>Participants get to understand their role as a resource group. They also plan how to best use SHGs and SHG Federations as effective platforms for such work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A SYSTEM 'IN QUESTION'

The school system, no doubt has been functioning with a very low level of efficiency. In many cases schools have reneged on their promise of education and are on the verge of being defunct. There are many reasons for this systemic failure but the entire blame is being put on teachers. Teachers have the responsibility to teach and if children are not performing it is being viewed as their failure. Finally, it is the teachers who have to deliver.

The fact of the matter is that the entire school system is in a crisis. Teachers being the last link in the chain are being blamed for this failure and they in turn blame children, parents and officials. In the absence of a proper analysis/understanding, everyone - shifts the blame on others for this state of affairs. There are multiple reasons for this failure and corrections have to be made at different levels, not at any single level, to change this situation.

One of the most important reasons, for this decline in the school system, is that everyone en-
gaged in managing this system sends their children to private schools. They have no personal stake in the school system. In other words, those who have the voice have deserted the public school system. And those who send their children to these schools find it difficult to raise their concerns. Thus, there is no pressure on the system to perform.

As a country we cannot afford to allow this situation to continue. Somewhere, the beginning has to be made towards changing this scenario of school education. We cannot afford to continue with the attitude of demoralization and defeatism among the stakeholders of the system. The dialogue has to begin with a very clear purpose of improving this situation.

A CRISIS OF MOTIVATION AND CONFIDENCE

Teachers feel that they are not supported, praised or respected. They lack guidance and training from the system. There is no system of reward and punishment. The system expects servility rather than innovativeness. Teachers are subjected to many non-teaching tasks. Most schemes and projects that are given to teachers have tremendous reporting and communication requirement. These, not only consume their valuable teaching time, but also encourage inflated reporting. They are penalized, if they fail to submit the report but not if their students perform poorly. These in turn, make teachers believe that the expectation of the system from them is different than teaching children. Their work culture and attitude is influenced by the overall social situation too. The school systems, like most public institutions, lack accountability towards the constituency they serve.

Our school system has become a typical example of credit travelling up and blame travelling down! The teacher is made a victim by the top levels. He/she is treated as scapegoat, and bears the brunt as well as absorbs the blame of all the mal-functioning that is occurs at various levels of the system. Once teachers are condemned, there is no motivation for them to perform better. We need to break out of this dismal situation and help our teachers overcome this defeatist outlook. Can teachers themselves sort out the mess which exists within the school system? They probably cannot do so on their own but they have an important role in changing this situation.

STUMBLING BLOCKS

Apart from teachers’ low self-esteem and de-motivation there are many other factors which constrain teachers in discharging their responsibilities. Some of these are:

- Mass enrollment of students is not supported by the appointment of more teachers - very unfavorable teacher pupil ratios prevail, especially in remote areas.
- Shortage of teachers often leads to neglect of students in early grades, leading to large number of children remaining illiterate or semi literate.
- Teachers are not equipped to deal with first generation learners while a sizeable number of our school children belong to this category.
- Due to non-availability of sufficient teachers and separate teachers for each grade (opening of small single teacher schools has further added to this difficulty) multi-grade teaching is a reality in most of our schools but our teachers are not equipped for the same. They continue to practice the archaic chalk and talk method and whole-class teaching.
- Also, staff for other non-academic activities is not recruited in proportion to quantitative expansion in schools and student enrolment. Therefore, teachers are forced to undertake non-teaching responsibilities as well.
- Teachers have to leave for trainings/conferences/seminars as soon as the circular arrives – therefore they are forced to neglect classroom responsibilities. Teachers have no autonomy at all.
- Teacher training systems are in need of an overhaul. There is an absence of well thought training opportunities that give teachers a chance to improve their academic understanding, as well as build their confidence.

HELPING TEACHERS BREAK THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF CYNICISM WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Transformation of disillusioned, de-motivated teachers is possible. Optimism and support coming from parents and fellow teachers can reorient disillusioned and de-motivated teachers. A teacher – as a human being and as a professional - needs appreciation, support, respect, and a supportive environment to function professionally - needs appreciation, support, respect, and a supportive environment to function competently. Ceaseless criticism discourages, annoys and demoralizes. Bringing about a solution is the responsibility of all stakeholders. These could be of use while trying to improve the position of teachers.

1. Discussion and analysis of the situation helps brings clarity and gives direction.
2. Respect and appreciation is the biggest motivation force.
3. Recognition and sharing of good work by other teachers.
4. Cooperation from other stakeholders inspires and supports teachers.

RESOURCES

- Right to Education Act-section on roles of teachers
- National reports on status of teachers
- State government rules on teacher recruitment, training and retention

TIPS FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

1. Ask the participants to discuss in groups the working conditions of school teachers in their villages.
2. Enlist their suggestions on how these situations could change and what impact will that have on the schools.
3. Ask community members to interact with teachers and understand their journeys as teachers - why did they choose teaching? How they progressed in their career?
ties. Teachers have the duty to facilitate the process of knowledge construction. Along with teachers, parents and society also need to understand nature of knowledge construction. They need to give as much exposure, opportunities and direction as possible to children to supplement textbook knowledge with practical realities.

Teachers’ ability to think critically and innovatively is also blunted by the system. They are not critical thinkers themselves. They are not trained in thinking ‘out-of-the-box’. Besides, they consider ‘teaching’ as their responsibility and not the ‘enabling of learning’. Learning is seldom focused on.

Knowledge is not imparted. It is constructed through active engagement of the child in the process of exploration. When a six year old child joins school, her language skills and vocabulary is substantially developed but acknowledging this and making use of same in the classroom learning, is not common. Knowledge that a child derives from home and her surrounding environment is discounted while teaching. In fact, children are even discouraged from bringing those experiences into the classroom. They have to artificially keep their own personal

CLASSROOM CULTURE AND TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESSES

GUIDING QUESTIONS
• What goes on in classrooms in our schools?
• How can learning be made more interesting for children?

IN THIS SECTION
• Understanding classroom processes
• Child-centered teaching and learning

Currently the focus in most of the schools is on completing curriculum rather than learning. The classroom transaction is limited to memorization of textbook content only. There is an overemphasis on information transfer and recall rather than on developing basic understanding of content. Curriculum needs to include recreational activities also. These may include music, sports, painting, outdoor visits etc. This will help to keep the learner interested and avoid slipping into boring, mundane, frustrating exercise. Outdoor activities allow student to explore and inquire. Content is created when connections are made between textbook knowledge and practical realities.
experiences out, from the learning in schools. This negates the entire treasure trove of experiences, knowledge and skills that the child has acquired. This frustrates the child and also encourages a split and dual personality. Locking out this prior knowledge and experience of his/her child from the classroom, hampers the natural development.

Classroom education is completely cut off from the realities of home and the society. Parents and society, as a whole, have a stake in learning and literacy progress of the children. They also need to understand the process of learning and knowledge construction and support it.

To promote learner-centric and competency-based practices, teacher training needs to transform in favor of a child-centered pedagogy. Teachers, themselves, need to be active learners, critical and creative thinkers.

When the learning process is child centered, it is also joyful. Every time children discover something new, they feel excited. This is the most important reason for ensuring retention of students. Most children drop out of schools because of non-comprehension which, very often, is a result of failure to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. Children’s learning achievement is a motivation for the teacher to perform better. Progress of students/ quality education motivates everyone – students, teachers, and parents. A student-teacher relationship should be based on love, care & respect.

### RESOURCES

- Right to Education Act- section on education quality
- National Curriculum Framework 2005
- State Curriculum framework

### TIPS FOR RESOURCE PERSONS

Important questions to be discussed with the participants:

1. How do children learn?
2. How can children learn better?
3. What is the role of teachers in the learning process?
4. What is a healthy teacher-child relationship and why is it important?
5. How does a teacher’s attitude effect child development?
6. What role can SMC play in ensuring child friendly classrooms and practices?
SCHOOL MAPPING AND MICRO-PLANNING (SM&MP)

RTE implementation guidelines visualize preparation of School Development Plan, using School Mapping and Micro-planning (SM&MP) exercise. School Mapping and Micro-planning is a process of involving local and regional stakeholders in the implementation of national educational policies and plans, thus constituting very important elements in achieving the EFA goals to which a country commits itself.

School Mapping as a tool for participatory planning for UEE, helps in assessing educational status of every child in the habitation. It also provides opportunity for local community to reflect on the issues impacting their children’s education and find appropriate actionable strategies to ensure universal enrollment, participation and completion with quality learning achievement.

KEY STEPS IN SCHOOL MAPPING AND MICRO-PLANNING EXERCISE

**ENVIRONMENT BUILDING**
- Dialogue with community on RTE, possibilities it brings and their role in implementing it

**CONSTITUTION OF CORE TEAM (PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE OF SMC)**
- Could be supported by Youth group and SHG members

**TRAINING OF PLANNING TEAM**
- Activity based training to give practical exposure to participants

**PREPARING A “NAZARI NAKSHA” - VILLAGE MAP LOCATING VARIOUS FACILITIES**
- Could involve other community members as well

**HOUSEHOLD SURVEY**
- Using survey questionnaire

**FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION TO UNDERSTAND ISSUES IN DEPTH**
- Discussions with parents and teachers at a convenient time

**ORGANIZATION OF DATA**
- Data should be organized on paper as well as using relevant softwares

**MATCHING SURVEY FINDINGS WITH DISE DATA**
- School report cards should be printed in advance

**SHARING OF SURVEY RESULTS WITH COMMUNITY**
- Should be done in a common meeting

**ANALYSIS AND CONSOLIDATION OF DATA**
- Data should clearly point at issues that need to be addressed

**NORM BASED PLANNING**
- Could involve local NGOs/CBOs/government officials

**APPROVAL OF PLAN BY THE GRAM SABHA OF SMC**
GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. There should be an SDP for each school. If a village has 3 schools, 3 plans must be prepared.

2. The SDP will be prepared by a sub-committee of the School Management Committee (SMC). Help / guidance from other sources may be taken. The community should be assigned data collection and verification tasks.

3. The plan period is 3 years. One plan for each year should be prepared.

4. Once it has been finalized, it should be presented in the Gram Sabha with an invitation to the community to suggest changes, if any.

5. The Plan should be sent to the prescribed office through proper channels, well in advance of the plan period. For example, for the year beginning June 2011, the Plan should be ready by December, 2010.

DEVELOPING THE SDP

1. Assess the current situation

2. Verify and analyze findings

3. Look for solutions which best fit ground realities

4. Include these in the plan, could be financial, social or economic in nature

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How can community level planning help school improvement?
- How to prepare effective School Development Plans?

IN THIS SECTION

- Guidelines for preparing SDPs
- Components of SDPs

The School Development Plan (SDP) is the soul of the transformation sought under the RTE Act. It should be prepared thoughtfully. It must have practical solutions to all questions raised at the time of comparing the existing situation with the desired situation, in relation to the school. The circumstances and needs of the village community must be reflected clearly in the SDP. The SDP ought not to be regarded merely as a budget proposal. Rather, its focus should be on key transformative issues, for example appointment of women teachers proportionately, and so on. Measures which make the school a place where the child experiences ‘growth’ should be stated in the plan. An easy test while making a decision / putting forward a demand is – ‘Does the child benefit from this? In what ways it benefit children? What can be changed to improve things for them?’

SDP should focus on key transformative issues for school education and reflect the circumstances and needs of the village community

{ SDP should focus on key transformative issues for school education and reflect the circumstances and needs of the village community }
COMPONENTS OF UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION THAT MUST REFLECT IN THE SDP

The scope of the RTE Act 2009 is vast. The aspects mentioned below must find a place in the SDP:

- Universal Access
- Universal coverage
- Physical infrastructure of the school
- Teachers - recruitment, training
- Universal retention, promotion
- Learning achievement - fixing a minimum acceptable level, measurement criteria

Now, we will scrutinize each aspect to determine how it will translate/ appear in the SDP. Quantitative data is easy to represent. For example, a need for tables can be stated in number required as well as its total cost. Deeper thought is required for inclusion of non-quantitative data in the Plan.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Definition: A school is available to every child in the age group 6-14 yrs, within 1km radius for primary and 3km radius for Upper Primary.

This has more to do with the location of the school. The location should be such that it is not affected by extreme weather. Say, if monsoon causes the seasonal river to flood, marooning the school beyond the reach of children, a change may be asked for.

THINGS TO DO

- Find out if there is a school in the village that is within bounds of children in the village and other catchment areas?
- If there is a school, is it within walking distance; 1 km or 3km, as the case may be?
- Also take note if the school is accessible by all sections of the community.
- If you come across issues being faced by children in accessing the schools, what issues are these?
- Discuss where the school should be located. Keep in mind that there is enough land to have a playground, etc and is safe for the children. The nearest available school should be clearly stated.
- If size of the population or geographical limitations does not merit a request for a school, some alternative must be suggested. Say, regular transport facility to the nearest school or, a residential school.

UNIVERSAL COVERAGE

Definition: No child in the 6-14 yrs age group remains out of school, for any reason.

The reasons which force a child out of school, whether they are inside the school (like uninteresting activities in the class) or outside the school (socio-economic reasons like the child having to fetch water for the family from a nearby/distant source) must be listed and analysed. These will suggest solutions for getting the child back/ into school.

THINGS TO DO

- A door-to-door count to find out the number of children who are out of school, whether, dropouts or those who have never been enrolled.
- Cross check the numbers with other sources like DISE, etc.
- What is the age of such children? Those in 11-14 yrs group will need quick remedies as they fall in the purview of the Act for a short duration.
- How long have they been out of school? If a child has been out for a long time say, 3 years or more, he may have to go through a Bridge Course to bring him at par in a short time.
- Why do children opt out of school? What takes them away from school when their motivation and aspirations are at the prime? Is it fear of some kind, dismay at the proceedings in the class? The reasons which keep them out will show the way for what must be included in the plan.

UNIVERSAL RETENTION

Definition: The number of children who have completed the required years in school.

THINGS TO DO

- Ascertain teacher requirements for the school, keeping in mind subject teachers for classes VI-VIII, female teachers, specialists like music, art, PT teachers, teachers due for retirement, bridge course needs.
- This should be compared with the number of sanctioned posts, deputations, etc. provided for already. The gap should then be covered.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Definition: All physical resources which must be present in a school for its effective functioning. Such resources must be in sufficient numbers, in working condition and completely child-friendly.

THINGS TO DO

- A door-to-door count to find out the number of children who are out of school, whether, dropouts or those who have never been enrolled.
- Cross check the numbers with other sources like DISE, etc.
- What is the age of such children? Those in 11-14 yrs group will need quick remedies as they fall in the purview of the Act for a short duration.
- How long have they been out of school? If a child has been out for a long time say, 3 years or more, he may have to go through a Bridge Course to bring him at par in a short time.
- Why do children opt out of school? What takes them away from school when their motivation and aspirations are at the prime? Is it fear of some kind, dismay at the proceedings in the class? The reasons which keep them out will show the way for what must be included in the plan.

TEACHER REQUIREMENT

Definition: The number of teachers required for primary and upper primary, as per RTE norms.

THINGS TO DO

- Ascertain teacher requirements for the school, keeping in mind subject teachers for classes VI-VIII, female teachers, specialists like music, art, PT teachers, teachers due for retirement, bridge course needs.
- This should be compared with the number of sanctioned posts, deputations, etc. provided for already. The gap should then be covered.


**TEACHER TRAINING**

Definition: The RTE has placed some new demands on teachers. They need to be trained through refresher courses to upgrade them and to familiarize them with the use and care of new Teaching Learning Methods (TLM) to meet these demands. Best classroom practices, methods of continuous evaluation, interactive teaching, etc., are examples of training for which a demand must be made in the SDP.

Teacher trainings, both pre-service and in-service have ignored some of the crucial aspects on which teacher capacities have to be developed. These are school-community relationship, especially the roles of parents and community in child development, problem of first generation learners, preparing School Development Plan etc.

**THINGS TO DO**

- Discuss the training calendars with the teachers to understand what sort of training they get and for what duration. Also, ascertain if there are any specific training programmes that the teachers would like to undergo.
- Timing and duration of the training programmes need to be concretized and provision for follow up of training should also be made in the plan.

**LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT**

Definition: Every child should be able to fluently read and write in first language and also achieve expected levels of learning (as per their age) as laid down by NCF 2005.

Some children may have been deprived of even basic literacy skills. Others may have acquired this but would have learning levels below their grades. Community/SMC may plan for interventions to fill this learning deficit. It is important to analyse why such deficits occur and find remedies for the same. Irregular attendance, teacher shortage, lack of individualized attention, failure to ensure basic literacy in early grades can be some of the probable reasons. In the revised guidelines of the SSA, provision for Learning Enhancement Program has also been made. There is adequate provision for training of teachers. But the training inputs so far have failed to meet the requirements of the teachers.

There is a need to monitor children’s learning progress not for the purpose of promoting or detaining them (detaining anyway is prohibited by the Act) but to make an assessment of the individual child, which also shows the performance of school. Social audit of learning is an important step, especially when there is apprehension that school performances are going to deteriorate further due to non-detention policy and absence of examination, especially external examination. Assessment of learning during a Children’s festival can be an important tool for social audit of learning. Parents in particular and community in general can witness how the children fare in different activities.

**THINGS TO DO**

- First of all, the community must be made aware of the expected levels of learning at different grade levels. Discuss with teachers and educationists in the area, what are the essential learning levels for each age group.
- Communicate this to all concerned—parents, teachers in a manner in which they can understand and ensure compliance. Say, every classroom can have a clear display on what the child needs to have learnt in a month in different subjects.
- Conduct a baseline for learning levels of children and understand what sort of deficits exist.
- Draw a plan for social audit of students’ learning achievement
- These must be analyzed along with the teachers and CRC members and interventions to remedy the same must find space in the SDP.

**UNIVERSAL RETENTION, PROMOTION**

These two aspects are interlinked. Academic excellence is an important outcome of good schooling. In the absence of detention, there should not be a slowdown in the drive to learn and progress. Moreover, a system of evaluation must be in place to measure and rectify deviations from the minimum expected expectations.

The RTE provides for annual promotion of children up to class VIII. Also, students who enroll must complete their education up to class VIII. This means that conditions in a school must be such which encourage the child to continue up to class VIII. There must be continuous evaluation to ascertain the learning levels periodically, for all classes.

**THINGS TO DO**

- Establish a periodic assessment program and its sharing with the parent and child.
- Bring in competent persons for external review of learning. This will lend objectivity to the process and make it more motivational.
- Determine ways to cover any deficit discovered after evaluation. The training, referred to earlier, will assist in this regard. New methods of teaching will also help.
- Have a priority plan for children of higher age bracket (11yrs up) and the migrant / disadvantaged to facilitate their coming up at par, in a short time.
- Enrich the child’s learning experience in multiple ways, supplement it in various ways. Say, day trips to nearby places, guided visits to public places and offices, opportunities for the child to display his interests and talent, acknowledge his skills through cultural programs, public sharing of the progress of children in numbers, awards at public functions, etc.

**BI-ANNUAL MONITORING OF INDIVIDUAL CHILD USING VER**

For the SMCs to ensure universal quality education, child-wise biannual monitoring using participatory tool is important. Village Education Register can be a useful tool for this purpose. It will be ideal that district or block education authority, prepare and print VER centrally and provide this to the SMCs. In any case SMCs need to be trained in child monitoring using VER.
WINDS OF CHANGE

SMC’s successful campaign- Nuapada, Odisha
Children and teachers in Kamalam school of Boden block were used to minor accidents because of the 1100 KV wire that was connected to the transformer situated within the school boundary. The training on School Development Planning helped the SMC members in articulating their demand and presenting it in an effective manner before the Collector and the District Education Officer. The SMC followed up on the demand regularly and ensured that action was taken within a month. The District Office appointed an engineer to look into the matter and Rs. 100,000 was sanctioned to move the transformer.

People talking about RTE training conducted under LAMP- Kachchh, Gujarat
“Education became a right but we still had no clue what it entailed for us. Our responsibilities were not clear. The training helped us clarify these doubts.”
- President, School Management Committee

“This program (LAMP) is working to improve the future of our children. I am ready to organize community meetings and also travel to attend other meetings even without a travel allowance. For me participation in these meetings is important.”
- Chairperson, School Management Committee

“Through the RTE campaign I understood what is Act was all about. In the subsequent training we learned how to work together on education related issues. If the government supports us it will make things much easier now.”
- Female SMC Member

“We got detailed information on SMC, its formation, role, how to work in groups etc. We will have to prepare people, more capacity building is needed.”
- School Principal

“I have seen many organization that misguide people during community trainings. But, the work being done under this program- LAMP is appreciable. I support them completely, with my whole team.”
- Cluster Resource Centre functionary

Impact of RTE awareness and school development plan training in LAMP schools in Maharashtra
“We had to facilitate community action in villages to dissolve some SMCs where SMC formation did not follow a legitimate process. All SMCs in LAMP villages have been constituted based on prescribed norms, given in RTE Act. These SMCs have started submitting their demands around school development to the block and district offices through School Development Plans. Government has responded by working on the requests. Infrastructure requirements of many schools like building of boundary wall, additional classrooms, hand pumps, student scholarships etc. have been met. SMCs have also started writing to government officials about RTE state rules.”
- Rahul Khadse, Program Manager of LAMP Partner Vikas Sahyog Pratishthan, Mumbai
REFERENCES

1. Right to Education Act 2009
3. District Information System for Education (DISE) - 2009-10
4. ASER- Assessment Survey Evaluation Research Report, 2010

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. CBO- Community Based Organisation
2. CRC- Cluster Resource Centre
3. CREATE- Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
4. DPEP- District Primary Education Programme
5. EGS- Education Guarantee Scheme
6. EWS- Economically Weaker Sections
7. GER- Gross Enrolment Ratio
8. LEP- Learning Enhancement Programme
9. MDM- Mid Day Meal
11. NCPCR- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
12. NER- Net Enrolment Ratio
13. PRI- Panachayati Raj Institution
14. PTR- Pupil Teacher Ratio
15. SCPCR- State Commission for Protection of Child Rights
16. SDP- School Development Plan
17. SDC- School Development Committee
18. SHG- Self Help Group
19. SSA-Sarva Siksha Abhiyan
20. TLM -Teaching Learning Material
21. VEC- Village Education Committee
22. VER- Village Education Register