

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SSA – A STUDY OF CHANDEL DISTRICT

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[Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a comprehensive and integrated flagship program of Government of India to attain Universal Elementary Education (UEE), covering the entire country in a mission mode. The program aims to provide useful and relevant, elementary education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010.

The scheme calls for community ownership of school-based interventions through effective decentralization and community based monitoring system.

Community participation is the main thrust of the scheme. The whole emphasis is on maximum participation of the local community and infrastructure for the development of the school and primary education.

Against this backdrop, the present paper attempts to discuss various programs of community mobilization of SSA, Chandel District and the issues and constraints in its process. The study is based on both primary source obtained through personal interview with the officials of SSA Chandel and secondary sources garnered from Annual Activities and Reports of SSA, Chandel, Journals, Cash Studies and Websites.

Keywords: SSA, Community Participation, Community Mobilization, Issues & Constraints.]

Introduction

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a comprehensive and integrated flagship program of Government of India to attain Universal Elementary Education (UEE), covering the entire country in a mission

mode. SSA has been launched in 2001-2002 in partnership with the State Governments and Local Self Governments. The program aims to provide useful and relevant, elementary

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education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010. It is an initiative to universalize and improve quality of education through decentralized and context specific planning and a process based, time bound implementation strategy. The program lays emphasis on bridging all gender and social category gaps at elementary education level with time bound objectives. On one hand, SSA is a program with its own targets, norms and processes and on the other it is an umbrella program covering other programs like District Primary Education Program (DPEP), Lok Jumbish, Operational Blackboard, etc. The gigantic dimensions of the program and the financial implications call for a meticulous planning and a rigorous appraisal.

Objectives of SSA:

1. All children must be in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, or 'To School' camps by 2003
2. All out of school children should have completed five years of primary schooling by 2007
3. All children should have completed eight years of schooling by 2010
4. Focus on quality elementary education with emphasis on education for life
5. All gender and social category gaps at primary stage should be bridged by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010
6. Universal retention by 2010

Basic Features of SSA:

- Institutional reforms in states.
- Sustainable financing in partnership with states (IX Plan 85:15, X Plan 75:25, After X plan 50:50).
- Community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralization.
- Institutional capacity building for improvement in quality.
- Community based monitoring with full transparency in all aspects of implementation.
- Community based approach to planning with a habitation as a unit of planning.
- A mainstreaming gender approach.
- Focus on the educational participation of children from the SC/ST, religious and linguistic minorities, etc.
- Thrust on quality and making education relevant.
- Recognition of critical role of teacher and focus on the human resource development needs of teachers
- Preparation of District Elementary Education Plans reflecting all governmental and non-governmental investments.

Major Areas of Interventions in SSA:

- Education of out-of-school children (Educational Guarantee Scheme and Alternative & Innovative Education)
- Quality Improvement

- Special Focus Groups
- Research and Evaluation
- Management Structure and Institutional Capacity Building
- Community Mobilization
- Civil Works
- Monitoring and MIS
- Financial Management and Procurement

If we go through major Characteristic, aims and objectives and basic features of SSA we would come across these major points regarding community intervention.

- a) Community ownership of school base interventions through effective decentralization.
- b) Community based monitoring with full transparency in all aspects of implementation.
- c) Community based approach to planning with habitation as a unit of planning.

Here it is clear that involvement of community is not only essential but core strategy of SSA.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To highlight various programs of SSA for community participation
- 2) To highlight various issues and constraints involved in community participation
- 3) To render few suggestions for active participation of community

Research Methodology

The present paper is based on primary as well as secondary source. Primary sources of data are obtained through personal interview with the officials of SSA Chandel and Secondary sources include Annual Activities and Reports of SSA, Chandel, Journals, Cash Studies and Websites.

Demographic Profile of Chandel District

Chandel District (erstwhile known as Tengenoupal District) came into existence on May 13, 1974. The District lies in the South-eastern part of Manipur at 24^o40'N Latitude and 93^o50' E Longitude. It is bounded by Myanmar on the South, Ukhrul District on the east, Churachandpur District on the south and west, and Thoubal District on the north. It is sparsely inhabited by about 20 different tribes. Prominent tribes in the District are Anal, Lamkang, Kuki, Monsang, Moyon, Chothe, Maring, Zou etc. There are also other communities like Meiteis, and Muslims (Meitei Pangal) in small numbers. The Moreh Town, International trade centre between India and Myanmar, lies on the southernmost part of the district.

Chandel is one of the most backward Districts in Manipur. The people depend predominantly on agriculture and its allied activities for livelihood. The District lacks infrastructural facilities like Roads, Transport, Communication, power and other modern facilities prerequisite for development.

SSA in Chandel District

Education scenario in the district is relatively dismal as compared to other district of the state. Since most of the people are engaged in agriculture and allied activities, education still remains a neglected area.

Consequent to several efforts of the Government of India in the field of elementary education particularly SSA, the district has taken a long stride in elementary education. SSA was launched in Chandel District in the year 2001-02. As per their official report 2012-13, there are 264 primary schools 40 upper primary schools and 33 secondary schools and almost 100% enrolment rate.

However, Chandel District has a long way to go as far as education is concerned. There is still a sizeable child population that is out of school. High dropout rates, low level of learning achievements and low participation of girls are still very prominent. Moreover, inadequate school infrastructure, badly run and inadequate funds add to the worsening situation. In this situation, community participation in the implementation of the scheme becomes crucial.

Community Participation

The 73rd Constitutional Act, 1992 confers constitutional status on the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The Constitution provides for devolution of Powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at Appropriate level keeping with the vision of Constitution. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has made adequate provision for community

environment in facilitating in implementation of various aspects of the program. Experiences of carrier programs like LOK JUMBISH & DPEP have also reinforced the role of community in education under SSA for grass root level participation of community in the educational scenario, many community forums and Institutions are involved extensively namely, SMC'S, MTA/PTA'S, etc. The community is expected to play a key role in micro planning. Especially in the development of village/ward education plan and school improvement plans.

Community participation is the main thrust of the scheme. The whole emphasis is on maximum participation of the local community and infrastructure for the development of the school and primary education.

The scheme calls for community ownership of school-based interventions through effective decentralization. The program will have a community based monitoring system. The Educational Management Information System (EMIS) will correlate school level data with community based information from micro planning and surveys. Besides this, every school will be encouraged to share all information with the community, including the grants received. A notice board would be put up in every school for this purpose.

As envisaged in the main objectives of SSA, the following programs were conducted during the last five years to ensure community participation.

Table 1. Community Mobilization Program During the Last Five Years

Year	Activities	Topic
2009-10	3 days Community leaders training in 4 blocks of the District	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Account maintenance 2. Role and function of VEC, HEC & WEC 3. Opening of bank account
2010-11	3 days non-residential training of VEC in 4 blocks of the District	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of RTE/ SSA 2. Role and Duties of SMDC and community leaders
2011-12	3 days Residential training of VEC and SMDC members in 4 blocks of the district	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of RTE/ SSA 2. Role and Duties of SMDC, community leaders, school & teachers 3. Management of accounts 4. Monitoring of the program
2012-13	3 days Residential training of SMDC members, Headmasters/ Headmistress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of RTE/ SSA 2. Role and Duties of SMDC, community leaders, school & teachers 3. Access, equity & quality
2013-14	3 Days training of SMC members and local authority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of RTE/ SSA 2. Role and Duties of SMDC, community leaders, school & teachers 3. Access, equity & quality

Source: Year wise Activities Report of SSA, Chandel Disrtict

From the given table above, it is evident that SSA is providing continuous training programs to ensure community participation in its implementation. What remains to be seen is the response from the community.

Issues and Constraints in Community Participation

There has been an improved participation of community in the implementation of SSA as a result of various activities undertaken by SSA. On the other hand,

there are still some outstanding issues which need to be addressed to ensure active participation of community in the implementation of the scheme.

1. Lack of awareness regarding the program among the community is a huge setback in its implementation. Due to lack of education, people in rural areas lack awareness regarding the objectives, interventions, their role and responsibilities towards the program.
2. Lack of willingness and commitment on the part of the local authorities regarding the program remains a big bottleneck in its implementation.
3. Lack of sincerity
4. The scheme is marred by financial irregularities at various stages. In most cases, funds allocated for the schools are embezzled by various parties thereby depriving the school of funds.
5. Lack of Constant Mobilization of the community results in low participation in the program. Though, mobilization programs are conducted yearly, the duration of the program is short and concentrated at reachable places.
6. Accessibility is a big problem hindering community mobilization. Chandel is a rural district. Most of the schools are situated in remote far flung villages where communication is a big problem. As such VEC & SMDC members could not attend the training program for want of timely information.

Suggestions

Few suggestions to ensure active participation of Community in the program :

1. Constant training and mobilization programs are necessary to be organized. Training programs should be conducted in cluster-wise to ensure maximum participation and effective training.
2. Participation of NGO's is vital for the success of the program. Constant monitoring and effective social audit is essential to achieve the programs objectives both quantitatively and qualitatively.
3. Community based activities of schools are to be encouraged to spread awareness among the community
4. Sincere and Committed members are to be appointed while constituting the VEC and SMDC members.
5. Proper co-ordination between VECs and SSA officials in all aspects of the scheme, right from the planning stage to the evaluation of the program is crucial for the success of the program.

Conclusion

SSA has brought about a sea change in the overall education scenario of Chandel District over the last few years. The District has witnessed improved infrastructures, increased enrolment rates, reduced dropout rates and upgraded schools to mention few.

SSA calls for active community participation in its implementation. The efficacy of the program depends to a huge extent upon the participation of the community in terms of ownership, monitoring, evaluation and planning involvement. Community Based Monitoring in specific issues like enrolment, retention, education of girl child and other disadvantaged groups, utilization of various grants and construction is important to ensure attainment of the program objective. As such sincerity and willingness on the part of the VEC and SMDC members becomes inevitable to achieve the programs aims and objectives of universal elementary education. Education is vital for economic growth. A giant leap in education will foster socio economic growth in the District.

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