

Overview

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has evolved from the recommendations of the State Education Ministers' Conference held in October 1998 for pursuing Universal Elementary Education in mission mode. SSA was launched in 2001-02 for providing useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years by 2010.

Performance audit of the implementation of the SSA revealed that though the programme was launched by the Ministry with ambitious targets, it required adequate funding and serious commitment on the part of implementing agencies including state governments. But the funds fell short of the requirements approved by the Project Approval Board (PAB) in the Annual Work Plan and Budget with the deficiencies ranging from 43 *per cent* to 57 *per cent* during 2001-02 to 2004-05.

Even after four years of the implementation of the scheme and utilisation of almost 86 *per cent* of funds available with the implementing agencies, the revised target of SSA to enroll all children in schools, education guarantee scheme, alternative schools, back to school camps by 2005 was not achieved as 1.36 crore children (40 *per cent* of the total 3.40 crore children out of school) remained out of school in the age group of 6-14 years. Outreach of education to focus groups and disabled children was also not adequate.

Audit noticed various financial irregularities amounting to Rs. 472.51 crore in 14 states/UTs such as non-adjustment of advances, loss of interest on funds kept in current account, excess payment of contingent grant, purchases made beyond delegated powers and non-refund of unutilised balances. In addition, an amount of Rs. 99.88 crore from SSA funds was diverted for meeting expenditure not covered under the scheme. There were delays in releasing the funds to the State Implementation Societies.

Substantial gaps between the planned and actual achievement in key areas such as classrooms, text books distribution, provision of teachers, their training and other infrastructure affecting the quality of education were also noticed. In nineteen states, there remained a shortage of 46622 upper primary schools.

Though SSA envisaged at least one primary school/Education Guarantee Scheme/Alternative Innovative Education centre within one kilometre of each habitation throughout the country, the facility was not available in 31648 habitations.

SSA, a significant initiative of Government to bring back the children in the age group of 6-14 years to school could achieve only partially the targets set for the scheme.