

Education of Tribal Children in India

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Background

The Indian Constitution assigns special status to the Scheduled Tribes (STs). Traditionally referred to as adivasis, vanbasis, tribes, or tribals, STs constitute about 8% of the Indian population. There are 573 Scheduled Tribes living in different parts of the country, having their own languages different from the one mostly spoken in the State where they live. There are more than 270 such languages in India. (India Education Report, 2002).

Box-I Who are STs

The term tribe or tribal is not defined anywhere in the Constitution although according to the Article 342, ST represents the tribe or tribal communities that are notified by the President. Tribes are not part of the traditional Hindu caste structure. STs in India are more like the “indigenous” or “native people” in other parts of the world.

Mishra (2002) defines Scheduled tribes as people who (i) claim themselves as indigenous to the soil; (ii) generally inhabit forest and hilly regions; (iii) largely pursue a subsistence level economy; (iv) have great regard for traditional religious and cultural practices; (v) believe in common ancestry and (vi) have strong group ties. However, all characteristics do not apply to all tribal communities.

Tribals are not homogenous groups. There are at least four groups of STs – hunting-gathering group, agricultural group, irrigation-agricultural group and industrial wage earning group.

Source : Mishra, 2002, Jha and Jhingran, 2002

Accordingly to the 1991 census, the tribal population in India is 67.8 million. The largest number of tribals is in undivided Madhya Pradesh (16.40 million), followed by Orissa (7 million) and Bihar (6.6 million). However, the largest proportion of tribals in total population is in Mizoram (95%), followed by Lakshadweep (93%), Nagaland (88%), Meghalaya (86%) and Arunachal Pradesh (64%). Nine States – Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal – together account for more than four-fifth of the tribal population in India.

Box 2: Tribals are Heterogeneous Groups

Tribals are not homogenous groups. Different tribes, even if living in the same village, maintain exclusive identities. Socialization is generally endogamous and they identify more with people belonging to their tribe rather than to those living in the same village or area. There is also a sense of being 'superior' to others in many tribes. For instance, the Gonds in Sidhi villages prefer to socialize only in their own community and do not consider the Kols and the Baigas equal to them.

Similarly, the Bhumiya at Mulasar village in Orissa look down upon the Parojas and the Kandhas, and the Kharwars in Ukamad village in Jharkhand do not consider the Korwas as equals. However, this seldom leads to any form of exploitation and cannot be compared with the practice of untouchability. This is more to do with an isolated existence and separate territoriality in the past.

The Soligas in Maddur Colony consider themselves 'superior' to Kurubhas whereas the Jenukurubhas feel they are superior to 'others'. The Kunbis and Warlis in Mahal Village in Dangs district in Gujarat also consider each other 'different'.

Source: Jha & Jhingran, 2002

There are 16 million ST children (10.87 million in 6-11 years and 5.12 million in 11-14 years) as on March 2001, out of the total child population of about 193 million in the age group of 6 to 14 years in the country (**Selected Educational Statistics – 2000-01**).

Realizing that Scheduled Tribes are one of the most deprived and marginalized groups with respect to education, a host of programmes and measures were initiated ever since the Independence. Elementary education is a priority area in the **Tribal sub-plans** from the 5th Five Year Plan. Education of ST children is considered important, not only because of the Constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities.

Another important development in the policy towards education of tribals is the **National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986** which specified among other things the following:

- Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas.
- There is need to develop curricula and devise instructional material in tribal language at the initial stages with arrangements for switchover to regional languages.
- ST youths will be encouraged to take up teaching in tribal areas.

- Ashram schools/residential schools will be established on a large scale in tribal areas.
- Incentive schemes will be formulated for the STs, keeping in view their special needs and lifestyle.

NPE, 1986 and Programme of Action (POA), 1992 recognized the heterogeneity and diversity of the tribal areas, besides underlining the importance of instruction through the mother tongue and the need for preparing teaching/learning material in the tribal languages.

Working group on Elementary and Adult Education for Xth Five Year Plan (2002-07) emphasized the need to improve the quality of education of tribal children and ensuring equity, besides further improving the access.

STs and Literacy

The literacy rate for STs has gone up from 8.5% (male – 13.8%, female – 3.2%) in 1961 to 29.6% (male – 40.6%, female – 18.2%) in 1991 and to 40% (male – 59%, female – 37%) in 1999-2000 as per the 55th Round of NSS.

Table 1: Literacy Rates – STs Vs. All Castes (in %)

Year	Scheduled Tribes			All Castes		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.8	3.2	8.5	34.4	12.9	24.0
1971	17.6	4.9	11.3	39.4	18.7	29.4
1981	24.5	8.0	16.4	56.5	29.9	43.7
1991	40.6	18.2	29.6	64.1	39.3	52.2
*1999-00	59.0	37.0	49.0	73.0	51.0	62.0
2001	NA	NA	NA	75.9	54.2	65.4

55th Round of NSS

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000.

Table 2: Comparative Literacy Rates – (in %)

Particulars	SC	ST	Other than SC/ST	Co-efficient of Equality	
Male	49.9	40.7	69.5	71.8	58.5
Female	23.8	18.2	44.8	53.0	40.6
Total	37.4	29.6	57.7	64.9	51.3

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 1999-2000.

States with large proportion of STs like Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya have high literacy rate while States with large number of tribals like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh have low tribal literacy rate (Sujatha, 2000). For instance, tribal literacy in Madhya Pradesh was 7.6% in 1971, 10.7% in 1981, 21.5% in 1991 and 36% in 1999-2000 (NSSs 55th Round) – all below the national average for tribal literacy.

The disparity among various States in terms of tribal literacy rates is high ranging from 82% in Mizoram to 17% in Andhra Pradesh (**India Education Report; 2002**). As many as 174 districts (out of 418 districts in the country in 1991) in 1991 have ST literacy rate below the national average of 29.6%. Tribal literacy in 17 districts (7 in Uttar Pradesh, 4 in Madhya Pradesh, 3 in Rajasthan, 2 in Assam and 1 in Orissa) is below 10% while in 3 districts, it is more than 90% (2 in Himachal Pradesh and 1 in Bihar). Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh has the lowest ST literacy – 4.8%.

Data reveal that States, which are low in general and tribal literacy are also States with higher gender disparity (**Sujatha, 2000**). The female literacy among STs has increased from just 3.2% in 1961 to 37% in 1999-00. As per 1991 Census, female literacy of tribals is high in Mizoram (79%), Nagaland (55%), Sikkim (50%) and Kerala (51%), compared to Andhra Pradesh (8.7%), and Rajasthan (4.4%). There were 119 districts in the country in 1991 where ST female literacy rate was below 10%. Most of them were in Madhya Pradesh (27), Uttar Pradesh (27), Bihar (20), Rajasthan (20) and Andhra Pradesh (11).

Although disaggregated data on tribal literacy from the 2001 census is not available yet, there is an indication that tribal literacy especially that of women may go up as most of the states with large number of STs have reported substantial increase in the literacy rate in the 2001 Census. NSS 55th Round (1999-2000) also gave indication of the rising trend of tribal literacy in India.

Strategies and Approaches in SSA

The National Programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which aims to achieve Universal Elementary Education (UEE), has a special focus on education of the tribal children. Tribal

children are an important constituent of the Special Focus Group (SFG) under SSA; other focus groups include girls, SCs, working children, urban deprived children, children with special needs, children below poverty line and migrating children. These groups are not mutually exclusive and they overlap.

One of the super goals of SSA is to “bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary stage by 2010”. The broad strategies under SSA reiterate that there will be a focus on participation of children from SC/ST and minorities, urban deprived children, children with special needs, working children and children in the hardest to reach groups.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) recognizes the varied issues and challenges in tribal education in view of the heterogeneous structure of tribal population in the country. The issues and challenges in tribal education can be categorized as external, internal, socio-economic and psychological. The external constraints are related to issues at levels of policy, planning and implementation while internal constraints are with respect to school system, content, curriculum, pedagogy, medium of instruction etc. The third set of problems relates to social economic and cultural background of tribals and psychological aspects of first generation learners.

STs are at different levels of socio-economic and educational development. STs in North Eastern States and those settled in urban and semi-urban areas are comparatively better placed. The problems of education of the ST children vary from area to area and tribe to tribe. Therefore, SSA emphasizes on area specific and tribe specific planning and implementation of interventions, which could meet the learning needs of ST children.

The planning teams at the State and district levels under SSA have been sensitized about the approach adopted and provisions made in the SSA framework for the education of ST children. The assessment of the problems issues and challenges relating to/of tribal education is made through the household surveys and micro planning exercise. The plans are developed by the districts based on the findings as well as the secondary data.

The '**Manual of Appraisal of Plans**' brought out by the Ministry of Human Resource Development has outlined appraisal issues with respect to planning of interventions for the education of tribal children. **Monitoring** tools have also been developed to ensure that programmes for education of tribal children are implemented as planned. A **checklist** to address the equity issues specially focusing the education of ST children has also been developed.

Some of the interventions being promoted in States under SSA include:

- Setting up schools, education guarantee centres and alternative schools in tribal habitations for non-enrolled and drop out children.
- Textbooks in mother tongue for children at the beginning of the primary education cycle, where they do not understand the regional language. Suitably adapt the curriculum and make available locally relevant teaching learning materials for tribal students.
- Special training for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect
- Special support to teachers as per need
- Deploying community teachers
- Bridge Language Inventory for use of teachers
- The school calendar in tribal areas may be prepared as per local requirements and festivals.
- Anganwadis and Balwadis or creches in each school in tribal areas so that the girls are relieved from sibling care responsibilities.
- Special plan for nomadic and migrant workers.
- Engagement of community organizers from ST communities with a focus on schooling needs of children from specific households.
- Ensuring sense of ownership of school communities by ST communities by increasing representatives of STs in VECs / PTAs etc. Involving community leaders in school management.
- Monitoring attendance and retention of children.
- Providing context specific interventions eg. Ashram school, hostel, incentives etc.

Provisions under SSA

SSA provides for Rs. 1.5 million per district per year for specific interventions for education of SC/ST children. It also provides free textbooks upto Rs. 150/- for girls and SC/ST children (SSA framework for implementation, 2002).

The other components under the broad framework of SSA which have an impact on the education of tribal education are (i) school/EGS like alternative facility to be set up within one kilometer of all habitations; (ii) upgradation of EGS to regular schools after two years; (iii) mainstreaming camps, bridge courses/residential camps for out of school girls SC/ST children under the alternative and innovative education component; (iv) provision of process based community participation with a focus on the participation of women and SC/ST; (v) free mid-day-meal to all children at primary stage; and (vi) interventions for early childhood care and education.

Universalizing access

One of the challenges in providing education to tribal children is with respect to setting up schooling facilities in small, scattered and remote tribal habitations. The majority of the Scheduled Tribes live in sparsely populated habitations in interior, and inaccessible hilly and forest areas of the country. Nearly 22 per cent of the tribal habitations have population less than 100 while more than 40% have population of 100 to 300. The rest have population of 300 to 500 (Sujatha, 2000).

Box – 3 Relaxed Norm on Setting up Schools

One of the reasons for poor access to schooling in tribal areas before 1980s was the high norm on population, number of children and distance for opening new schools. Most of the States have relaxed these norms to enable setting up schools even in small tribal hamlets. This, along with other measures has improved access in tribal areas. For instance, Andhra Pradesh has relaxed norms to set up schools in habitations even with 20 school-age children. Some States Karnataka etc. have lowered the population size norm, especially for tribal areas. EGS centers can now be established even with 15 children. In remote tribal habitations in hilly areas of North Eastern States and Jammu & Kashmir, EGS schools can be opened even with 10 children.

The Sixth All India Educational Survey (1993) shows that 78 per cent of tribal population and 56 per cent of tribal habitations have been provided primary schools within the habitation. In addition, 11 per cent of tribal population and 20 per cent of tribal habitations have schools within less than 1 km radius. About 65 per cent of rural habitations covering 86 per cent of the total rural population have primary schools within the habitations or within a distance of half kilometer, as against 56 per cent of tribal habitations with 79 per cent of tribal population. Mizoram and Gujarat have the highest percentage of population and habitations covered by primary schools within the habitations. As high as 95 per cent of tribal population and 85 to 90 per cent of the tribal habitations in the States are provided with schooling facility within the habitation.

According to the **Sixth All India Educational Survey (1993)** there are about 176,500 habitations without schooling facilities, mostly in tribal habitations and habitations of hardest to reach groups. The situation regarding access has now improved substantially, thanks to the schemes like NFE/Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE), DPEP and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

More than 70,000 education guarantee centres and alternative schools were opened under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), EGS schemes and other programmes in the State over the last 10 years. In addition about 116,000 new primary and upper primary schools were opened since 1996-97 – as number of schools increased from 767,000 in 1995-96 to 883,000 in 2001-02 (Abstract of Educational Statistics 2001-02).

Subsequent to this statistical report, SSA sanctioned in the last two years over 85,000 new schools. In addition 300,000 EGS centers and equal number of alternative and innovative education centers were sanctioned to benefit more than 14 million never enrolled and out of school children. Many of these new schools, EGS centers and alternative schools have been sanctioned in the tribal habitations, improving the schooling access.

As per the latest estimate (2003-04), there are about 81,000 unserved habitations in the country. The largest number of unserved habitations without primary schools is in Bihar (14200) followed by Orissa (13100), Assam (12300), Rajasthan (8000), West Bengal (6600) and Andhra Pradesh (4100). These unserved habitations are being covered under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Considered the position of access to schooling in tribal areas in States. **Madhya Pradesh** has set up EGS schools in every habitation having at least 40 children. The majority of these EGS schools are located in tribal areas. **Andhra Pradesh** has gone one step further by deciding to set up community schools called 'Mabadi' in every habitation with at least 15 children. In Javadu hills of Tiru district of **Tamil Nadu**, access to formal schools was a major problem for the tribal population. The State has opened a number of **forest schools** in these areas. In **Kerala**, over 100 **multigrade centres** have been set up in small tribal habitations, which have at least 20 children. In Gadchirauli and Dhule of **Maharashtra**, there were many tribal habitations where children do not have access to schooling. **Contract schools** have been set up in these habitations. In Gujarat, there are many districts with significant tribal population, which migrate with children in search of work. The State has adopted strategies like summer camps, seasonal hostels and salt farm schools for covering children in such areas. Bridge Courses are run for such children to ensure that children could be readmitted to formal schools. In **Himachal Pradesh**, Sirmour district experimented with mobile teachers for migrating Gujjar children in Nohrudhar education Block.

There are residential **Ashram** Schools for tribal children in many States including Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.

Box-4 : Ashram School

Ashram schools are residential schools for tribal children from a cluster of habitations. Based on the Gandhian philosophy of self-reliance, it was first experimented by Thakkar Bapa, a Gandhian in Panchmahal district of Gujarat in the pre-independence days (**Ananda, 1994**). Ashram schools were found effective as (i) it was not feasible to open full fledged schools in very small and scattered habitations (ii) it created congenial atmosphere for teaching learning as it is assumed that the tribal households do not have such an environment and (iii) it helped to develop the total personality of the child and impart vocational skills to improve employment opportunities.

Ashram schools generally provide admission to children from habitations at least 6-8 kms away from the school. If children from nearby villages are admitted, they are not provided with boarding. The curriculum of Ashram schools includes agriculture and other life skills in addition to general subjects.

Many parents in Jharkhand, Orissa and Gujarat preferred Ashram schools as they provided free food, clothing and boarding. Some parents said that education of their wards in Ashram schools was not obstructed, when parents migrated for work.

Source: Jha & Jhingran, 2002

In **Bihar** emphasis is on opening Apana Vidyalayas in tribal dominated villages for non-enrolled/dropout children. The Angana Vidyalayas for 9+ girls have also been set up on a priority basis in SC/ST dominated areas. In **Assam** about 1200 AS centres are run in tribal and tea garden estates. Apart from setting up of alternative schools for remote habitations, the alternative schooling strategies under SSA have also targeted out of school children in tribal areas and pockets.

Universalizing Participation

Out of the ST child population of 16 million in the age group of 6-14 years, more than 14 million (11 million at primary stage and 3 million upper primary stage) ST children are attending schools during 2000-01 (**Selected Educational Statistics 2001-02**). This means about 2 million ST children were not attending school during 2001-02.

Table 3: Enrolment of ST Students During 1980-81 to 2000-01 (In million)

Year	Primary (I-V)			Upper Primary (VI-VIII)			Elementary (I-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1980-81	3.1	1.5	4.6	0.5	0.2	0.7	3.6	1.7	5.3
1985-86	4.2	2.4	6.6	0.9	0.4	1.3	5.1	2.8	7.9
1990-91	4.9	2.9	7.8	1.1	0.6	1.7	6.0	3.5	9.5
1995-96	5.6	3.8	9.4	1.5	0.8	2.3	7.1	4.6	11.7
1996-97	5.2	3.6	8.8	1.6	0.9	2.5	6.8	4.5	11.3
1997-98	5.1	3.9	9.0	1.5	0.9	2.4	6.6	4.8	11.4
1998-99	5.3	4.0	9.3	1.6	1.0	2.6	6.9	5.0	11.9
1999-00	6.1	4.5	10.6	1.8	1.1	2.9	7.9	5.6	13.5
2000-01	6.3	4.7	11.0	1.9	1.2	3.1	8.2	5.9	14.1

Source: Selected Educational Statistics 2000-01

The enrolment of scheduled tribes at the primary and upper primary in the last 20 years from 1980-81 to 2000-01 increased by 2.4 and 4.2 times respectively. There has been a clear positive trend with respect to participation of ST girls in education. Their enrolment increased by 3 times at primary and 6 times at upper primary stage during the same period. The share of tribal girls in the total school going tribal children at the elementary stage increased from 32.1% in 1981 to 41.2% in 2000-01.

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of ST children is now about 96 to 100% at primary stage and 88 to 89% at elementary stage, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) of ST Students (In per cent)

Year	Primary (I-V)			Upper Primary (VI-VIII)			Elementary (I-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1986-87	111.0	68.0	90.0	45.6	21.9	34.1	87.1	51.1	69.6
1990-91	125.4	81.4	104.0	53.9	26.7	40.7	99.6	60.2	80.4
1995-96	115.0	80.2	96.9	57.3	35.0	46.5	105.7	75.1	90.9
1996-97	113.7	83.3	98.7	58.3	36.6	47.9	87.6	61.3	74.8
1997-98	102.9	78.3	90.7	53.0	32.9	43.2	85.1	62.4	73.9
1998-99	96.9	73.2	85.1	63.4	40.5	52.2	86.3	63.2	74.9
1999-00	112.7	82.7	97.7	70.8	44.8	58.0	99.3	70.9	85.2
2000-01	116.9	85.5	101.1	72.5	47.7	60.2	102.5	73.5	88.0
2001-02	106.9	85.1	96.3	82.1	57.3	70.3	99.8	77.3	88.9

Source: Abstract of Selected Educational Statistics – 2001-02

In DPEP districts, DISE Data on enrolment of tribal children during 1997-98 to 1999-2000 indicates increase in enrolment of tribal children as given below.

Table 5: ST Enrolment in DPEP (in 100,000)

State	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000
Assam	2.63	2.34	2.36
Haryana	0	0	0
Karnataka	2.50	2.62	2.72
Kerala	0.16	0.21	0.21
Madhya Pradesh	12.40	13.41	14.31
Maharashtra	7.12	7.85	8.04
Tamil Nadu	0.28	0.30	0.31
Gujarat	2.33	2.64	2.88
Himachal Pradesh	0.24	0.24	0.24
Orissa	3.51	3.70	3.85
Bihar	4.80	4.77	4.36
Uttar Pradesh	0.08	0.08	0.08
West Bengal	0.71	0.70	0.78
All India	36.76	38.86	40.14

Box – 5 : Oases of Universal Education

The school participation of children, especially tribal children, is influenced by interplay of a range of factors at school, society and family. For school participation, ideally, all the three factors should be positive or at least one or two factors should be strongly favourable.

There are a few oases of universal education in the country. One such area is the tribal blocks of Dondi and Dondi Lohara Blocks in the Durg district of the newly formed Chhattisgarh State. In Dondi, out of the child population (6-14 years) of 24,518, the enrolment is 24,404. There are only 104 out-of-school children in the block. The net enrolment ration (NER) at primary stage is an almost impossible figure – 99.79%. The drop out rate is just 0.76% and completion rate is as high as 96.4% (**DISE 2003, Durg**).

Dondi Lohara, the adjacent tribal block is another island of excellence in UEE. It also has similar almost impossible educational indicators. Of the child population of 33,471, there are only 103 out-of-school children. The NER at primary stage is 99.24% and at upper primary 99.58%. The drop out rate is only 0.58% and completion rate 94.42% (**DISE 2003, Durg**).

I could not see a single out-of-school child in the fields, roads and ponds of Dondi and Dondi Lohara blocks during my three-day field visit in August, 2003. But one afternoon I saw an 11 year old boy grazing cattle in the Karre forest area in the Dondi Lohara block. When I approached him, the boy started running but I chased him. He was not an out-of-school child. A grade 4 student from the neighbouring district, he had come to spend 2-3 days with his uncle in Dondi Lohara.

What sets apart Dondi and Dondi Lohara – the islands of UEE – from the rest of the country? There are several reasons. Firstly, the hugely successful total literacy campaign in the Durg district in 1989-91 created a positive perception on value of education. Secondly, most of the children are second-generation learners, which reflects the parental interest in education. Thirdly, there are no social inequalities among social groups and there is no social exclusion or social disharmony. Fourthly, most of the tribals and dalits have land holding and therefore, they are not affected by poverty or economic deprivation.

Source: Zachariah, 2003

Box-6: Education – Social Norm in Kerala

Kerala is another example where the main driver of high school participation of tribal children is societal factors. In Kerala, the societal norm in favour of education even among STs - had emerged long back. There were several factors – socio-potential awakening, absence of social inequalities and social exclusion and snowballing effect of the benefits of education – which helped to evolve social norms.

When asked why she sends her children to school, a mother in the tribal hamlet of Kozhikodam oor (hamlet) in Attapady block of Palaghat district in Kerala was baffled. She had not thought about it and did not know what to say. Where else the children should go other than to the school, she wondered. Sending children to school is a social norm in Kerala, the State that has achieved cent percent literacy and where the health and HDI indicators are comparable to that of United States.

Source: Zachariah, 2003

Convergence between the tribal welfare department and the education department is also critical for enhancing and ensuring school participation of STs. In many States schools in tribal areas are run by the tribal welfare department or tribal development authorities while the curriculum, textbooks, school calendar, examination are set by the education department. Moreover, synergy of replication, opening of new schools, residential camps etc. leads to larger coverage and outreach of tribal communities.

Quality Improvement

Most of the States address the issues related to teachers' attitudes, medium of instruction, textbooks and materials, curriculum and pedagogy, and teaching-learning process in tribal areas.

*An increasing number of researches strongly advocate the use of the **mother tongue** or home language as media of instruction in early stages of education. This assumes greater significance in the context of education of tribal children because their mother tongue is often quite distinct from the prominent languages in the State or regional languages. ST children face problems wherever teachers do not speak their dialect at all. From the perspective of language, it is desirable to have a local teacher from the same tribal community (Jha & Jhingran, 2002).*

Though Research evidence also favour bilingual or multi lingual schooling in view of its positive consequences for cognitive development and social interaction processes, it would need special treatment for tribal children to be able to cope.

The Constitution of India allows the use of tribal dialect (mother tongue) as the medium of instruction if the population of the tribe is more than 100,000.

Assam was the first State to prepare teacher training modules and separate teaching learning materials for the Bodo tribal language in 1995. Bodo is also a medium of instructions in some districts of Assam. The work on tribal language materials was undertaken through DIET staff and BRC/CRC coordinators who belonged to the tribal community. Resource material in Bodo language has been prepared and all workbooks at primary stage have been translated/adopted in Bodo language. In Golpara district, Garo medium workbook has been translated/adopted and distributed in the schools.

Most of the States have taken up activities for quality improvement of tribal area schools. One of the issues identified by the States was the problem faced by tribal children whose home language was very different from the regional language, which was the medium of instruction at the primary level.

In **Madhya Pradesh** teachers' handbooks called Bridge Language Inventory (BLIs) have been prepared in 3 tribal languages viz. Gondi (Shahdol and Betul district), Kuduk, (Raigarh) and Bhili (Dhar). Identified teachers were imparted training for use of BLISs in classroom transaction. The teaching-learning package called Dham Dhama Dham was translated into Gondi and supplementary reading material Kopal was developed for tribal children. The class I textbook Bharati has been translated into tribal languages. Supplementary TLM for tribal children has been development in Jhabua district using local cultural from i.e. folk tales, songs, proverbs, riddles to make the learning process interesting. In all, 450 teachers of 311 schools have been trained to use the supplementary materials.

Researches have underlined the need to develop culturally sensitive programme of school education that can ensure dignity of tribal groups by providing them with economically viable options for life (Sinha & Mishra, 1997). Some attempts have been made for linking curriculum with the local needs of the communities. Such curriculum would make tribal children more sensitive to local contexts and sustain them in their respective environments instead of forcing them to move out in search of another life.

In **Karnataka** a textbook for class I & II has been developed and introduced for Soliga language. A handbook has been developed for sensitisation of teachers towards social and cultural specificities of tribal societies. In **Maharashtra** tribal language dictionaries have been developed. Language resource groups have been set up for Bhili, Pawara, Madia, Gondi etc. Bridge material has been developed in Dhule district. **Kerala** has developed bilingual language materials at district level in Kasarkode, Waynad, Malappuram and Palakkad.

Orissa took initiative to develop a comprehensive strategy for education of tribal children as early as 1997. The State has initiated a number of activities for addressing the quality improvement of tribal education

Box – 7: Quality Improvement: Orissa

A large number of teachers have undergone **attitudinal training** which has had a significant impact on the attitudes of non-tribal teachers towards tribal children. Continuing efforts are being made to sustain the impact of the attitudinal training through **block and cluster level meetings** of teachers by including items for discussion on these issues in the monthly meetings. **A linguistic survey and mapping** has been completed by the Academy of Tribal Dialects and Culture in 4 districts viz. Kalahandia, Gajapati, Raygoda and Keonjher. The State has also explored the use of folklore in primary education, which would help to tap the rich tradition in arts, crafts, music, songs, etc. in tribal societies. Stories and riddles have been collected for use by the teachers and classrooms.

- Seven Tribal Primers in seven tribal languages i.e. Saora, Santali, Kui, Kuvi, Koya, Bonda and Juanag.
- Teachers' handbook of the 7 tribal language primers
- Saora self reading materials
- Picture dictionary in tribal languages
- Training module on how to use the tribal primer in classroom.
- 16 folk stories developed in Saora (tribal language) and Oriya for both teachers and children.
- Conversation chart with about 100 commonly used sentences in Oriya Saora was prepared and distributed.

Andhra Pradesh has developed bilingual dictionaries and teacher training has been organised in Warangal and Vizianagaram districts. For use of the bilingual material, Research studies have also been undertaken on the issue of language and Maths learning by tribal children. It has been decided to use the multi-level kits developed for tribal areas in Vishakapatnam district in other tribal areas also.

Gujarat has developed dictionaries in Dangsi and Bhili dialects. A local work glossary in Dangsi has been prepared and distributed in schools for class I-IV in Dang district. Similarly a local word glossary in Adivasi dialect has been prepared for class I-IV in Banaskantha district and distributed in schools. The Vidyasahayaks were given training on the use of these dictionaries. Gujarat has also initiated extensive work for preparation of TLM in tribal languages. The TLM developed include flash cards for different languages and also cards for mathematics. These have been supplied to all school in tribal areas. Bridge Language Inventory has also been introduced in Ho and Mandavi languages in Ranchi district of **Bihar**.

The acceptance of **Teachers** by the community as one among them is critical for increasing the schooling participation in tribal areas. An understanding of and respect for tribal cultures and practices are important for teachers to gain this acceptance.

The presence of tribal teachers, especially from the same community, has shown and improved school participation of ST children. Coming from the same community, it is believed that the teachers would understand and respect the culture and the ethos with much greater sensitivity. Studies suggest that teacher motivation contributes more to teaching – learning process than teacher competence (Vaidyanathan and Nair, 2001).

Realising the importance of having teachers from the local community many States have appointed community teachers or para teachers as they are popularly referred to. The deployment of community teachers was first experimented in the late Seventies in NFE and later in the formal school with the Volunteer Teacher Scheme of Himachal Pradesh (1984). Nineties saw spurt in the appointment of community teachers, who are from the local community and appointed by the gram panchayat for Village Education Committees. Different States have different schemes for appointing community teachers – Shiksha Karmi Scheme (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan), Shiksha Mitra yojana (Uttar Pradesh), Lok Shikshak (Bihar), Andariki – Vidya Volunteer Scheme (Andhra Pradesh), Vidya Upasak Yojana (Himachal Pradesh), Shikshan Sevak (Maharashtra), Guruji (under EGS in Madhya Pradesh) Shikshak (under Basti Shala Scheme in Maharashtra) etc. It is estimated that there are about 220,000 para teachers engaged in full time schools in the country (Ed. CIL 2001).

The issues relating to classroom transaction are difficult as they deal with well entrenched attitudes and prejudices of teachers as well as seemingly intractable problems of the huge difference between home and school language. Attempts have been made to address the first issue through training programme for teachers. However, more emphasis on attitudinal training of teachers on the lines of Orissa is required in most of the States. The second issue has been addressed mainly through the BLIs and primers in tribal languages. There may be a problem of acceptance of the tribal language as a medium of instruction in the tribal communities, therefore, adequate dialogue with tribal communities and their leaders is required to prepare them on this issue.

Poverty, deprivation, poor economic condition, low earning, struggle for survival, dependence on forest products, seasonal migration are some of the other road blocks in providing universal education to scheduled tribes. Jha and Jhingran (2002) says that “One incidence of illness in the family, one year of drought or the transfer of a teacher – anything can bring a change in circumstances and may mean discontinuation in the schooling of these tribal children”. All most all States have scholarships, incentives and

allowance for ST children to offset their private cost of education and encourage school participation. These measures have been found fruitful, but timely provision of these incentives is important.

Children helping parents in their work is a social norm in many tribal communities. The involvement of children in livelihood activities – cattle grazing, collection of forest productions etc. – makes it difficult for them to attend school. Girls, apart from taking part in agricultural activities and collection of forest products are commonly engaged in sibling care. (Jha and Jhingran, 2002).

SSA provides for a range of approaches and interventions for working children and out of school children. This includes summer camps, back to school camps, bridge courses, residential camps, remedial teaching centres, remedial classes etc.

Learning Achievement

Earlier studies on learning achievement of tribal children at primary classes had shown lower levels of achievement compared to non tribals (**Govinda and Varghese 1993, Varghese 1994, Sujatha 1998, Prakash et al. 1998**), although empirical evidence suggest that tribal children do possess the basic cognitive abilities and psychological dispositions for successful participation in schools. The low achievement levels among tribals are attributed to school-related variables as in the case of non-tribal students.

Tribal students had additional disadvantages arising out of social and location factor (**Sujatha, 1998**). **Singh (1996) and Singh and Jayaswal (1981)** have argued that low levels of parental education, occupation, income and deprivation, are mainly responsible for poor performance of tribal children in the school. Other roadblocks include negative parental attitude to education, less parental support in schoolwork, low level of motivation and poor self-esteem of children. **Sinha and Mishra (1997)** argue that tribal children can perform well in school if the intervention programmes directed at them can overcome their deprivation.

However, learning achievement surveys conducted in DPEP show that in a majority of the districts the gap between achievement levels of ST children and other children has been reduced to less than 5%. The situation is better in language than in Maths.

There is a need to evolve sensitive model of tribal education rooted in the psychological strengths of tribal children. Studies indicate that, in comparison to other groups, hunters and gatherers possess a high level of visual and tactual differentiation, they demonstrate capacity for fine judgement of shape and size of stimuli as well as spatial relations, and produce the categorization of an array of objects (**Mishra et al., 1996**). These abilities are greatly required for success in science, art, music, dance, athletic activities, and vocations like carpentry, tailoring, wood and stone crafts. These skills need to be utilized not only for education of tribal children in schools, but also in the broader economic spheres of tribal life. Such attempts will be helpful in generating and promoting the sense of competence, self-efficacy, self-respect, and positive self-image among tribal children in general (**Mishra, 2002**).

E. Community Mobilization/involvement

As for all other population groups and areas, community mobilization and awareness generation on issues of enrolment, education of girl children, retention of children in schools and school involvement are carried out in tribal areas. The specific features of such mobilization in tribal areas have been / are:

- Use of tribal/folk art forms (Kerala, Assam, Bihar, Orissa)
- Meetings of mothers and family meetings and involvement of tribal youth volunteers (Assam, Kerala, Orissa).
- Leaflets posters, Kalajathas, and videocassettes in tribal languages (Kerala, Assam, Orissa, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, etc.)
- Organization of meetings in tribal 'haats' / bazaars and use of tribal fairs and festive occasions to discuss primary education issues (Assam, Gujarat).
- Involvement of traditional tribal organizations in the mobilization effort (Assam, Orissa).
- Involvement of the community including VECs members in documentation of local folklore, history, traditional medicine, agricultural practices (Assam).