

**Minutes of the 81<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Project Approval Board (PAB),  
Government of India, Shastri Bhawan, and New Delhi held on  
12<sup>th</sup> April 2006.**

The 81<sup>st</sup> meeting of the PAB Meeting under the Chairmanship of Secretary Elementary Education & Literacy, Government of India, for consideration and approval of Annual Work Plan & Budget (AWP&B) 2006-07 in respect of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Mizorum, Punjab, Chattisgarh and West Bengal was held at Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2006. List of participants is given at Annexure-I

**Item No.5: Consideration AWP&B 2006-07 in respect of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) West Bengal**

1. A presentation showing progress made by the SSA in West Bengal was made by the Incharge SPD Shri S. B. Biswas. He indicated the achievements made so far against the targets in key components and specifically highlighted the recruitment of teachers and the good progress civil works. He also mentioned the constraints faced by the State including the delay in receipt of PAB approval for 2005-06. He mentioned that the Integrated Learning Improvement Programme (ILIP) would be taken up in all the 52,000 primary schools in the state during 2006-07. Besides, he also mentioned that the School Education (SE) department of the Government of West Bengal has provided 5000 computers in Upper Primary Schools in the state. Special Secretary Education represented the Government of West Bengal. Mission Director, SSK Mission also attended the PAB meeting.
2. Fact Sheet with educational indicators is at Annexure-II
3. The Appraisal Team raised a few important issues. Firstly about the unsatisfactory status of the Project Management for implementing SSA at every level. At SPO and DPO level there are 141 vacant posts, which need to be filled up. Also arrangements for coordination, regular review and monitoring need to be strengthened. Secondly, the issue regarding low levels of learning achieved by children both at the primary and the upper primary levels was raised. Thirdly, a concern was articulated regarding low completion rates, and high repetition rates in the Primary cycle. Fourthly, that although 95% of the funds earmarked for civil works had been utilised in 2005-06, the completion rate of the construction was below 40%. There is an absence of any systemic approach to ensure timely completion of civil works at grass root levels with the guarantee of quality. The appraisal team also pointed out that the state's estimates on out of school children (6.64 lakh) are much lower than the findings made by independent surveys like SRI-IMRB (12.13 lakh). West Bengal SSA has not

conducted household survey during 2005-06 despite a commitment to do so. Besides, the strategies suggested by the state for out of school children were not adequate especially for 11-14 years old children and vulnerable groups like migrating and deprived urban children. Also, no separate plans were submitted for urban areas. On issues of teachers' training, the Appraisal Team informed that the commitment given during PAB for 2005-06 regarding 30 day's training of newly inducted teachers has not been addressed. Dr. Rafiqul Islam of Shanti Niketan University mentioned the need for carrying out full scale cohort studies and formulate strategies to address the issues thrown up by the same. Besides, a number of action researches were also called for. The Appraisal Team also raised the issue of non-convergence of various agencies implementing SSA at the grass root level upwards.

4. Shri Dhir Jhingran, Director, MHRD raised a serious concern about dissonance on several issues between the SSA State office and the School Education Department. For example, the Principal Secretary, Education Department, Government of West Bengal favoured recruitment of regular teachers and not contract teachers. He was also of the view that SSA in West Bengal was functioning in an isolated manner. Mr. Jhingran emphasized the very inadequate administrative leadership of the SSA in the State and the unsatisfactory coordination among various agencies at the State level which adversely affected the implementation of SSA. There was also no clear nodal agency for ensuring universal physical access for primary / upper primary levels in the State.
5. Secretary, EE&L expressed her anguish and serious concern over the lacklustre attitude of the SSA West Bengal. She mentioned that the views of the Joint Review Missions as well as the Appraisal Team clearly suggest that the State SSA lacks in seriousness towards universalisation of elementary education. All the educational indicators, she asserted, portray an unsatisfactory picture of the elementary education sector in the state. She also insisted that enough time has been spent drawing the State's attention towards the problems of coordination with different agencies involved in education and continued inaction on this front would further harm the programme. She also mentioned that SSA and Government of West Bengal need to study the SRI-IMRB Report and present a considered view on its findings. She also stated that appropriate arrangements for convergence between agencies and regular monitoring and follow-up have not been put in place.
6. JS (EE-II) raised the issue of application made by the Lepcha Association of Darjeeling for alternative schools and that two

references have been made to Government of West Bengal, but GOI has not been informed of the position. Special Secretary, Education West Bengal agreed to look into the matter.

7. The following commitments were made by Shri P.K. Goswami, Special Secretary, School Education, West Bengal and Shri S.B. Biswas, Incharge SPD, West Bengal:
  - (i) **All the teachers' posts, approved by the PAB till 2005-06 would be filled up by December 2006.**
  - (ii) **All the on-going civil works activities would be completed by December 2006.**
8. **Since the State government has made a provision, for Rs 150 crore only as State share for SSA in 2006-07, the PAB restricted its approval of AWP&B 2006-07 to Rs 600 crore only. The amount, however, would be treated only as a holding budget, i.e., the budgetary provision needed to support on-going activities only.**
9. The State Government and SSA West Bengal could approach the PAB again in June 2006 for approval of the complete AWP&B 2006-07 provided
  - (i) a comprehensive arrangement for coordination and convergence between various implementing agencies is worked out and
  - (ii) measures outlined to strengthen project management, especially regular follow-up and monitoring of programme implementation.
  - (iii) **The State Government would evolve a policy regarding upgradation of SSKs and MSKs to regular Primary and Upper Primary Schools respectively, so as to fulfil the constitutional mandate for UEE.**
  - (iv) It is also expected that a full time State Project Director should be in place by then. The State Education Secretary would also make it convenient to attend the PAB meeting to provide the State Government's assurances & policy support for the SSA in West Bengal.
10. DPEP is being implemented in five districts of West Bengal and the Project is due for closure on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

The State has submitted a proposal for Rs 94.77 crore as AWP&B for DPEP for 2006-07. This includes a civil works proposal of Rs 31.26 crore. The Appraisal Team examined the proposals. As the civil works ceiling has already been exhausted by March 2005, this amount could not be recommended for PAB's consideration. Besides, the management cost for Purulia district was budgeted for Rs 1.07 crore whereas; the average for the DPEP districts in the State was budgeted at Rs 55 lakh for the same component. Hence, the appraisal team recommended a total of Rs 62.99 Crore for PAB's consideration for DPEP in West Bengal for 2006-07. The approval of PAB would be subject to the approval of the Finance Ministry for exceeding the EFC cost by utilising the price and physical contingencies as well as the ceiling of Rs. 40 crores per district.

The PAB cancelled its approval given in the 79<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006 for additional allocation for civil works under AWP&B 2005-06 for the 5 DPEP districts. This decision has been revised in view of the ceiling for civil works had been exhausted during 2004-05 itself.

**11. Based on the recommendations of the Appraisal Team, observations made by the participants and clarifications given by the State representatives, the following decisions taken and approvals were accorded by the PAB in respect AWP&B 2006-07 for SSA/NPEGEL and DPEP West Bengal.**

- (a) AWP&B for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) was approved for an amount of Rs.600 crores only for ongoing activities. A district-wise, component-wise break-up of this amount would be furnished by the State within 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2006. State Project Office was advised to approach the PAB after fulfilling the requirements made outlined in para 8 above.
- (b) For DPEP the PAB approved fresh outlay of Rs.6298.52 lakhs subject to requisite approval from the Ministry of Finance. No spill over from 2005-06 was approved.**

The state summary, along with district-wise approved costing tables for DPEP are given at Annexure-III