

1. Background and Rationale:

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (1992) gives the basic policy framework for education, emphasizing on correcting the existing inequalities. It stresses on reducing dropout rates, improving learning achievements and expanding access to students who have not had an easy opportunity to be a part of the general system. The NPE, 1986 envisaged some measures for integrating of children with physical and mental handicap with the general community as equal partners, preparing them for their normal growth and development and enabling them to face life with courage and confidence.

India has also been a signatory to international declarations like the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) and the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (2002) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 that emphasize the need for fundamental educational policy shifts to enable general schools to include children with disabilities.

The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Education for the Disabled Children (revised 1992) is presently being implemented in States and UTs in over 90,000 schools benefiting over 2,00,000 children with disabilities. The scheme was introduced with a view to providing educational opportunities for children with disabilities in general schools, to facilitate their retention in the school system. It provides for facilities to students with disabilities including expenses on books and stationery, expenses on uniforms, transport allowance, reader allowance, escort allowance, hostel accommodation and actual cost of equipment. The scheme also supports the appointment of special teachers, provision for resource rooms and removal of architectural barriers in schools.

An important policy development after 1992 has been the enactment of Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protections of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. Article 26 (a) of the Act makes it a statutory responsibility on the part of Central, State and Local Governments to provide free education in an "appropriate environment" for all children with disabilities up to the age of 18 years. Article 26(b) of the Act calls upon appropriate governments and local authorities to promote the integration of students with disabilities in normal schools. In addition, the Act stipulates that the appropriate Governments and the local authorities, inter alia, shall make schemes for varieties of educational initiatives and strategies.

The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has set time-bound targets for the achievement of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) by 2010. With "zero rejection" as its cornerstone, the programme provides support for the inclusion of children with disabilities in general schools at the elementary level. SSA has a provision for the inclusive education component @ Rs.1200 per child with special needs per annum. Under the programme, over 20 lakh children with disabilities have been identified and over 15 lakh children with disabilities in the age group 6-14 years have been enrolled in general schools. The increase in enrolment at the elementary level is expected in the coming years to lead to a surge in the demand for secondary education. This will include children with disabilities.

The National Curriculum Framework on School Education (NCF - 2005) recommends making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas.

3.

The CAFE committee report on the Universalization of Secondary Education (June, 2005) recommends that the guiding principle of Universal Secondary Education should be Universal Access, Equality and Social Justice, Relevance and Development, and Structural and Curricular Considerations. The CAFE Committee Report on "Girls' Education and the Common School System" has recommended making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and non-cognitive areas.

The National Action Plan for Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) developed by the MHRD (November -2005) emphasizes the inclusion of children and young persons with disability in all general educational settings from Early Childhood to Higher Education. The goal of the Action Plan is –"to ensure the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in all available general educational settings, by providing them with a learning environment that is available, accessible, affordable and appropriate." Outputs 1, 2 and 4 of the Action Plan are of relevance to secondary education.

Currently accurate data are not available in respect of the exact number of children with disabilities transiting from the elementary to the secondary level. As per census 2001 about 2% of the total population constitutes persons with disabilities. Projections relating to the number of children with disabilities entering the secondary level will need to be made therefore on certain key assumptions:

- Sufficient inputs and crucial necessary interventions would have been provided at the ECCE and Elementary level for children with disabilities to ensure their retention and achievement levels through classes which would prepare them adequately for entering the secondary sector.
- The secondary school system would adopt structural, curricular and pedagogical reforms that will extend the access of secondary education to this hitherto marginalized section of society and make their participation at this level genuinely inclusive.

Children with disabilities constitute one of the largest groups that are still outside the fold of the general education system. Under the existing IEDC Scheme it has not been possible to cover all disabled children primarily because implementation has been based on receipt of viable proposals from the implementing agencies. No conscious effort has been made to target all disabled children. As SSA supports inclusion of children with special needs at the early childhood education and elementary education level, it is desirable to introduce a scheme for the disabled children at secondary stage. The scheme for IEDSS is therefore envisaged to enable all children and young persons with disabilities to have access to secondary education and to improve their enrolment, retention and achievement in the general education system. Under the scheme every school is proposed to be made disabled-friendly.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

The Centrally Sponsored IEDSS Scheme aims to:

- enable all students with disabilities completing eight years of elementary schooling an opportunity to complete four years of secondary schooling (classes IX to XII) in an inclusive and enabling environment
- provide educational opportunities and facilities to students with disabilities in the general education system at the secondary level (classes IX to XII).

- support the training of general school teachers to meet the needs of children with disabilities at the secondary level.

The objectives of the scheme will be to ensure that

- Every child with disability will be identified at the secondary level and his educational need assessed.
- Every student in need of aids and appliances, assistive devices, will be provided the same
- All architectural barriers in schools are removed so that students with disability have access to classrooms, laboratories, libraries and toilets in the school.
- Each student with disability will be supplied learning material as per his/ her requirement
- All general school teachers at the secondary level will be provided basic training to teach students with disabilities within a period of three to five years.
- Students with disabilities will have access to support services like the appointment of special educators, establishment of resource rooms in every block .
- Model schools are set up in every state to develop good replicable practices in inclusive education.

### 3. Target Group

The scheme will cover all children of age 14+ passing out of elementary schools and studying in secondary stage in Government, local body and Government-aided schools, with one or more disabilities as defined under the Persons with Disabilities Act (1995) and the National Trust Act (1999) in the age group 14+ to 18+ (classes IX to XII), namely

- Blindness
- Low vision
- Leprosy cured
- Hearing impairment
- Locomotor disabilities
- Mental retardation
- Mental Illness
- Autism
- Cerebral Palsy

And may eventually cover (i) Speech impairment and (ii) Learning Disabilities, etc.

Girls with disabilities will receive special focus and efforts would be made under the scheme to help them gain access to secondary schools, as also to information and guidance for developing their potential.

### 4. Type of Scheme

This is a centrally sponsored scheme under which the Central Government will assist the States/Union Territories and autonomous bodies of stature in the field of education in its implementation on the basis of the criteria laid down. Assistance for all the items covered in the scheme will be on 100 per cent basis but assistance for the programme would be subject to policy guidelines issued and initiatives to be taken by the appropriate government for implementing the educational provisions of the P.W.D. Act.

### 5. Components of the Scheme

5.1 It is proposed to provide for educational facilities under this scheme for all children with disabilities that are included in general schools at the secondary and senior secondary level (classes IX to XII).

5.2 The Scheme will include assistance for two kinds of components, viz.:-

- I Student-oriented components, and
- II Other components (e.g. those relating to infrastructure, teacher training, awareness generation, etc.)

5.2.I For the first group of components, it is proposed to provide assistance to States/ Union Territories / Autonomous bodies @ Rs.3000/- per disabled child per annum for specified items, on the pattern of SSA which provides assistance @ Rs.1200/- per disabled child per annum for the elementary level. (This rate was fixed in 2001-2002). The State Government will provide a top up of Rs.600/- per child per annum towards scholarship for each child. This amount of Rs.3000/- per disabled child per annum may be spent on the following components:-

- (i) Identification and assessment of children with disabilities. The assessment team may include an interdisciplinary expert team of special educators, clinical psychologists, therapists, doctors and any other professional support based on the students' needs. (Sr. No. I.1 of Appendix-I)
- (ii) Provision of aids and appliances to all students with disabilities needing them, if these are not already being provided for through existing schemes like ADIP, State Schemes, voluntary organizations, Rotary clubs etc. (Sr. No. I.8 of Appendix-I)
- (iii) Access to learning material ensuring that each disabled student will have access to learning material as per his/ her requirement like Braille textbooks, audiotapes, talking books etc, textbooks in large prints and any other material needed. (Sr. No. I.8 of Appendix-I)
- (iv) Provision of facilities like transport facilities, hostel facilities, scholarships, books, uniforms, assistive devices, support staff (readers, amanuensis). (Sr. No. I.1 to I.5 and I.7 to I.11 of Appendix I). A suggested list of assistive devices as per different disability needs at individual child level and at resource room level is provided in Appendix II. This, however, may not be taken as the exhaustive list.
- (v) Stipend for Girl Students with Disabilities Since Girl students with disabilities face discrimination, they, in addition to availing facilities under all schemes specially targeting girls' education, will be given a stipend @ Rs.200 per month at the secondary level to encourage their participation up to senior secondary level. (Sr. No. I.6 of Appendix-I).
- (vi) The use of ICT: Access to technology is especially relevant for the disabled as it increases their access to a vast amount of information not otherwise available. Computers provided to students in secondary schools will also be made accessible to those with disabilities. The scheme will provide for the purchase of appropriate technology by way of special software such as Screen Reading software like JAWS, SAFA, etc. for the visually impaired and speech recognition software for

the hearing impaired to develop computer vocabulary for the hearing impaired and modified hardware like adapted keyboards. (Sr. No. L13 of Appendix-I).

- (vii) Development of teaching learning material :-The scheme will cover the expenses incurred on organizing the mobilization of such support as certified by the School Principal/Educational Administrators. Financial assistance under this scheme will be available for purchase/production of instructional materials for the disabled and also for purchase of equipment required therefore. Wherever necessary, the available material will be translated and produced in regional languages. The scheme will also support workshops for adaptation in the curricular content and development of supplementary material, self-learning material for teachers and students at the secondary level of school education. (Sr. No. L14 of Appendix-I)
- (viii) External support from an interdisciplinary team of experts such as educational psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, physiotherapists, mobility instructors and medical experts has to be coordinated at the local level. Support can be made available at the cluster level and needs of children with disabilities in a cluster of schools may be addressed. The expenses incurred on mobilizing such support in the form of TA/DA and consultancy fee will be covered under the scheme for children and young persons with disabilities at the secondary school level. Funds may be drawn from the child specific funds of Rs. 3000/- per child. (Sr. No. L12 of Appendix-I)

5.2.II Costs of non-beneficiary-oriented components like teacher training, construction and equipping of resource rooms, creating model schools, research and monitoring, etc. will be covered separately. These components would be as follows:-

- (i) Removal of architectural barriers to ensure that students with disabilities have access to each classroom, laboratory, library and toilet in the school. A detailed manual laying out norms and guidelines for accessibility required by different types of disability will be developed at the central level with the help of the Office Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). The scheme will support development of the accessible physical environment in existing secondary school buildings. (Sr. No. II.8 of Appendix-I)
- (ii) Training of special/ general school teachers : Special teachers to be trained through regular programmes run by the National Institutes/Apex Institutes of RCI or under any other programme of the States. There should be a component of in-service training for resource teachers to equip them with handling of other disability area. All general teachers at the secondary level will be trained in particular strategies like making educationally useful assessments, planning an individualized and need-specific curriculum, teaching styles which include audiovisual aids, appropriate instructional strategies, etc. (Sr. No. II.4 of Appendix-I).
- (iii) Orientation of principals, educational administrators: This training will include developing strategies for management of inclusive education. This will include teachers (both special and general), local educational administrators, Principals / Headmasters of Institutions, parents/ guardians of the disabled children. (Sr. No. II.5 of Appendix-I)
- (iv) Strengthening of training institutions and assistance to existing organization/NGOs to develop teacher's training programme in inclusive schooling and for educational interventions for specific disabilities. (Sr. No. II.9 of Appendix-I)

- (v) Provision of resource rooms and equipment for the resource rooms in one school per block/urban cluster. Norms in terms of size, accessible features will be developed with the support of relevant agencies at the Central and State level. A suggested list of assistive devices/equipment for the resource room is given in the Appendix-II. (Sr. No. II 6 & 7 of Appendix-I)
- (vi) Appointment of Special Educators: Support from special educators will differ at the secondary level from that at the elementary level. Special Educators will be appointed in the ratio 1:5. Ideally every school where disabled children are enrolled should have the services of at least one special teacher. If the numbers of children are less, this teacher could also work for other schools in the cluster. For note on Appointment of Special Educators/Resource Teachers see Appendix III. (Sr. No. II.1 of Appendix-I).
- (vii) Development of some existing schools as Model Inclusive Schools so as to accelerate the process of education of children and youth with disabilities with initiatives from parents, teachers, community and respective governments. Norms will be developed at the central level with the help of relevant state and national level agencies, to provide the whole range of support for these schools. Funds for these will be charged towards the research component. (Sr. No. II.10 of Appendix-I)
- (viii) Administration, Research & Development, and Monitoring & Evaluation. These will form an integral part of the IEDSS Scheme. The State Government/NGOs/Autonomous bodies will have to formulate proposals for designing and developing new assistive devices, ICT technology, teaching aids, special teaching materials or such other items as are necessary to give a child with disability equal opportunities in education. Every year 5% of the funds available at the Central level will be earmarked for administration, innovative and R&D projects and monitoring and evaluation. (Sr. No. II.10 of Appendix-I)
- (ix) Environment Building Programmes upto Rs.10,000/- per programme at local level.

The scheme will provide funds only in cases where there are no other provisions for the items under other schemes operative at State/Central level.

5.3 Statement at Appendix 1 gives the proposed financial parameters.

6. Other support-

At the secondary level, all children with disabilities included under the general education system may not require adaptations in the teaching learning process and evaluation procedures. However there may be some who would require some adaptations. The States/UTs/ Autonomous bodies can take the support of special teachers, SCERTs, DIETs, Special Schools, Resource Centres, Non-Governmental Organizations, State Boards and any other community institutions available at the local level for this purpose.

Adaptations in Examination procedures: Some children with disabilities may require some adaptations in the evaluation procedures according to their special needs. The existing evaluation procedures can be reviewed at the State level and modified accordingly.

Provision for alternative modes of examination for children and youth with disabilities should be considered and provided by the Boards of Examination. This is being visualized mainly as a process of issuing appropriate orders and notifications by the Boards concerned. Separate budget as such is not planned under the scheme.

7. Partnerships and Linkages

Linkages with the different Ministries/Organizations like Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI); National Trust etc. will help in creating convergence of resources and funds for addressing the needs of children with disabilities. Coordination Committees at various levels i.e. State, District and sub- district levels will help the planning and implementation of inclusive education at the secondary level.

Formation of Parents / Guardians Groups at community/ village level for sharing of information regarding benefits available from the scheme for their wards will be encouraged.

#### 8. Regulations for Relaxation of Rules

State Governments/UT Administrations/ Autonomous bodies/ other implementing agencies will make provisions for relaxation of rules relating to admissions, minimum or maximum age limit for admission, promotion, examination procedure so as to facilitate in improving access of children with disabilities to education. At the Secondary level, young persons with disabilities beyond 18 yrs. will be supported for a period upto 4 years to help them complete secondary schooling.

#### 9. Implementing Agencies

The Scheme will be implemented by the Education Departments of State Governments / UT Administrations directly. The States / UTs may involve Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) having experience in the field of education of the disabled in the implementation of the scheme. The Scheme could also be implemented by autonomous organizations of stature having experience in the field of education and / or rehabilitation of the disabled. There will be an inbuilt-flexibility in implementation strategies and practices, depending upon the contextual needs and the authority to interpret or reinterpret the provisions of the scheme will lie with the Secretary, School Education & Literacy, Government of India.

#### 10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Appropriate structures will be established at the Central, State, District, and block and city level to ensure obtaining feedback from functionaries at different levels.

The implementing agency should set up an Administrative Cell to implement, monitor and evaluate the programme. The existing Administrative Cell set up under the IEDC Scheme should serve the purpose. In States / UTs where the Administrative Cell has not been set up, the State Education Department will initiate action to set it up. The Cell will consist of Deputy Director (in the scale of pay applicable in the State Government), a Co-ordinator (who will be a psychologist) in the scale equable to University Lecturers), a Stenographer and an LDC in the pay scale applicable to such posts in the State Govt. / UT Administration.

At the national level, a comprehensive monitoring mechanism would be evolved in MHRD with involvement of National Apex level Institutes like the NCERT and / or NIEPA and / or reputed voluntary organizations and /or individual experts and /or autonomous bodies. Data on Enrollment and performance of children with disabilities at the secondary stage in proforma to be developed at the central level will need to be maintained by the states.

The State Governments will oversee the utilization of money and collect the quantitative data, and prepare state specific report and forward it to the MHRD monitoring unit. State appointed local monitoring agency/ authority would follow the guidelines and use the common evaluation format. The monitoring arrangements will include both qualitative and quantitative data. In addition to monitoring, review exercises can be undertaken

