

Social Exclusion of Scheduled Caste Children from Primary Education in India

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Executive Summary

While the 83rd constitutional amendment recognizes education as a fundamental right of all Indian citizens, disparities continue to be pronounced between the various castes. People from the Scheduled Castes, previously referred to as the “untouchables”, make up 16% of the population and consistently fare poorer across various indicators related to primary education. Consistent with the human rights-based approach to programming, which emphasizes the importance of duty-bearers fulfilling their respective obligations, this paper analyses the extent of social exclusion of scheduled caste children in primary education in India and argues for a comprehensive policy response which addresses the various barriers to accessing education of this disadvantaged group.

This paper will review the underlying causes of the disadvantaged status related to primary education of children from scheduled castes (SCs) which remain largely unaddressed and therefore remain as significant barriers to attending school. Furthermore, the structural causes of social exclusion, such as continued high level of poverty of scheduled caste children, also remain as significant constraints. The paper concludes by arguing that in order for social policy to adequately respond to social exclusion in primary education in India, a holistic approach should be adopted including addressing the structural and basic causes of the problem in a context-specific, comprehensive manner.

Theoretical framework

As a definition, “social exclusion reflects the multiple and overlapping nature of the disadvantages experienced by certain groups and categories of the population, with social identity as the central axis of their exclusion.” (Kabeer, 3) The value-addedness of the social exclusion approach is its emphasis on the role of relational features in deprivation. (Sen, 2000). Social exclusion can therefore be explained in terms of group interactions aimed at maximizing value and minimizing costs. “Individuals are most vulnerable when they have fewest personal capacities and material resources...but none of these threatens their survival so long as they enjoy the protections afforded by membership of an inclusive group that co-operates productively and redistributes its product.” (Jordan, 5). Jordan goes on to write that “all interactions take place in the context of norms, practices and institutions that steer, stabilize and regulate them.” (Jordan, 164). Members regulate each other’s actions by reinforcing norms of social obligation, and offer mutual support and assistance on a reciprocal basis. “All social formations have rules about rights as well as obligations, which determine when, where and how the goods for final consumption will be distributed. These rules are laid down collectively, but result in individual entitlements.” (Jordan, 26) This paper will examine the social norms related to caste which influence the access and quality of primary education. By defining poverty in terms of material possession, or deprivation of services, which is the predominant focus of public discourse on poverty, rather than in terms of social relationships (and the resulting exclusion which can come from these relationships), the resulting focus of social policy is on providing universal benefits or “reaching the poor” rather than ensuring the social inclusion of the excluded.

Social Exclusion as a Human Rights Issue

Reviewing the effectiveness of policies and programmes in addressing social exclusion relates to the discussion on human development and human rights. Put simply, development approaches from the 1950s to the 1980s primarily focused on social and economic development as an outcome of the development process and were less concerned with civil and political rights. During this period, government policy and the development community were also less concerned with the quality of the process by which the outcomes were achieved (Jonsson, 2003, 4). In contrast, the human rights-based approach to development recognizes both the achievement of a desirable outcome and the establishment of an adequate process to achieve and sustain that outcome. “Participation, local ownership, empowerment, and sustainability are essential characteristics of a high-quality process (Jonsson, 2003, 45). A rights perspective is based on principles that emphasize accountability of those with obligations to realize the rights of children; the universality of rights; the indivisibility and interdependence of rights; and also the principle of the best interests of the child and taking into account the views of the child. The state and the other ‘duty-bearers’ (eg. parents and teachers) have obligations to fulfill these rights. As rights-holders, children are entitled to demand that the duty-bearers meet their respective obligation to respect, protect and fulfill their rights. (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2002)

This global shift in development towards a human rights perspective has important implications for addressing social exclusion in education as it encourages one to take a broader, systemic and more holistic view of the issue and not interpret it only as a failure of the education system alone. A thorough analysis of the implications of adopting a human rights-based approach to programming is beyond the scope of this paper, however it is sufficient to note that this approach necessitates a broader perspective in addressing the issue of social exclusion, and also highlights the importance of focusing on both achieving the desired outcome (i.e. all children in school) and following an inclusive and participatory process. Similar to the broader recognition that poverty is not merely a lack of income but rather a condition of living in various forms of deprivation, social exclusion is not only a development issue, but is also a human rights issue and therefore requires a more comprehensive and process-oriented response.

Overview of Schedule Caste in India

As per the Census 2001, the total population of the Scheduled Castes (SC) in India is 166,635,700, which is 16.3 per cent of the total population (Registrar General, 2005). The population of SCs is unevenly distributed among the states in India, with nearly 60 per cent of all SC children of primary school-going age (6-10 years) residing in the following six states: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The latter five states are among the most disadvantaged states in India across most social indicators.

While a comprehensive review of the caste system is beyond the scope of the paper, it is important to note that historically, the caste system classified people by their occupation and status. “Each caste had a specific place in the hierarchy of social status. (Shah, 19). Although in “scriptural terms” social and economic status were supposed to be separated, the economic and social status of the various castes tended to coincide (Shah, 2006). However, since the 19th century, the link between caste and occupation has become less rigid as it became easier for people to change occupations. This change has accelerated with the economic boom which has taken place in India since the early 1990s. There has not, however, been a corresponding fluidity in caste, as intermarriage is very rare. Privileged sections of society tend to be from “upper castes” while the disadvantaged sections by the so called “lower castes”. Caste “can be seen as the institution that has been structuring and maintaining for centuries relations of power among different communities, and seeks to legitimize these power relations through systematically dispensing mixes of economic and cultural assets/opportunities and deprivations to different communities. (Sheth, 3). Many have commented on the robustness of the caste system, “which has survived in the South Asian societies in one form or the other, despite the fundamental ideological and structural changes that have occurred through the spread of religions like Islam and Christianity as well as of model secular and egalitarian ideologues, all opposed to the very idea of hierarchy based on inherited statuses.” (Sheth, 5).

The specific structure and hierarchy related to castes is specific to various states and regions in India, with only the highest caste, the Brahmins, consistently faring better throughout the country. Not only are there differences in the names of the various castes, but also the hierarchy between them may also be different between regions. However, castes who traditionally suffered discrimination based on untouchability, which was an element of the caste system throughout India, have been identified, enumerated and incorporated in the “schedule” of the Constitution. “The implicit criterion for inclusion in the SC list is the social and religious disability suffered by a caste on account of untouchability i.e. being at the pollution end of the social hierarchy” (Sheth, 40). In defining who would be included in the Schedules, the government originally used the 1931 census report, and to a large extent duplicated a list created in 1936 (de Haan, 2005). Currently, the National Commissions for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) are vested with the responsibility of considering castes for inclusion or exclusion from the Schedule, which then needs to be ratified in Parliament. The discriminated communities are then officially designated as Scheduled Castes (SCs). Included in the SC category are communities from three different religions, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, all having within them communities traditionally suffering from untouchability. The term Dalit (meaning down-trodden or oppressed) is the generally accepted term for the “ex-untouchables”, which corresponds to Scheduled Castes, which as mentioned above denotes the legal states as coined in the Constitution.

The Government of India’s approach to historically marginalized groups draws on provisions made in the Indian Constitution, which contains explicit state obligation towards protecting and promoting social, economic, political and cultural rights. “The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the

weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation” (Directive Principle of state Policy, Article 46). The Constitution mandates positive discrimination in government services, state-run, and sponsored educational institutions. Amendments to the Constitution also enabled representation of SC men and women in local governance structures. (de Haan, 2005)

Some of the constitutional provisions which aimed at positive discrimination are:

Article 17: Abolition of “untouchability” and making its practice in any form a punishable offence

Article 46: Promotion of educational and economic interests

Article 16 and 335: Preferential treatment in matters of employment in public services

Article 330 and 332: Reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) and State Assemblies

Scheduled caste (SC) children remain disadvantaged across many social indicators. Estimates from the 2000 National Sample Survey suggest that SC “constituted 20 per cent of the rural population, but 38 per cent of the poor” (Kabeer, 3). Table 1 shows that as an average for India, 27.09% of the population live below the poverty line in rural areas, compared to 36.25% of the SC population and 23.62% in urban areas compared to 38.47% of the SC population. Furthermore, after holding a variety of individual and household characteristics constant, which will be discussed later in this paper, (including such as education, occupation, age and gender of the head of the household), Kabeer notes that the SCs were still 19 percent more likely to be poor than the rest of the population. (Kabeer, 4).

Table 1: Population below poverty line in India, SC and ST (NSSO, 1999/00)

Population below poverty line (%)	India	SCs	STs
Rural Areas	27.09	36.25	45.86
Urban areas	23.62	38.47	34.75

Source: National Sample Survey Organisation

Mehrotra (2006) recognized that there has been political and social mobilization of SCs in India, particularly in certain poor states such as Uttar Pradesh, which is one of the poorest states in India. However, this mobilization has failed to translate into positive change in the social sector for this excluded population. As Mehrotra wrote, “while UP’s mobilizers of the dalits (SCs) have focused exclusively on capturing power, the gains to the lowest castes have been entirely of a symbolic nature.” (Mehrotra, 2006, pg 1).

Overview of Education in India and the Extent of Social exclusion of Scheduled Caste Children

There has been a significant increase in overall literacy rates and school participation rates across the country since the early 1990s. Gender and social disparities have also

declined with an overall increase in school attendance. This is confirmed by the data from various sources including the National Family Health Survey–II (1998/99), Reproductive and Child Health Survey 2002-2004, the 2001 Census and routine monitoring information from the Department of Education. The country is approaching near universalisation of enrolment at the primary stage. The Gross Enrollment Rate has increased from 90% in 2003-2004 to 98% in 2004-2005. Similarly, the net enrollment rate has risen from 72% to 82% during the same period. (Department of Education, 2006) A number of factors have contributed to the rising enrollment rate including the introduction of mid-days meals, opening of alternate schools, promoting the participation of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and massive enrolment drives.

A constitutional amendment was passed in 2002 making free and compulsory education a fundamental right for children aged 6-14 years. The national and state governments continue to deliver the programme *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), which aims to achieve universal elementary education by 2010.

While enrolment and attendance in primary school has increased, the quality of education remains a major concern. Little emphasis has been placed on making education more relevant or in encouraging learning by doing and learning by observation. Activity-based and child-centered learning arrangements are still very weak. There are many situations where children mechanically go through five years of primary education and emerge barely literate, leading to community apathy towards schooling. The poor quality of education is reflected in the continuing low level of completion rates of primary school. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) and National Family Health Survey (NFHS) collected data on the ‘level of education completed’, whereas the Reproductive Child Health Survey (RCHS) provided data on the years of education completed. The length of primary education is also defined differently in different states of India with some states having 5 years of primary education and others having 4 years. Hence in some states the completion rate is calculated for 9-11 years age group while in others it is with the 10-12 years of age. Table 2 indicates that, based on the RCHS-II (2002-2004), 37.8% of children in 10-12 years age group have completed at least 5 years of schooling.

Table 2: Percentage of children completing primary school (various sources)

Disparities in primary education can be seen between children from different castes, economic group, sex, rural and urban, certain characteristics of households and between the different regions in India. These different forms of deprivation do not work in isolation. The most disadvantaged children would suffer from multiple forms of exclusion and disadvantages, including for example being SC, girls, poor, living in a poor and/or remote location, etc. It is therefore important to acknowledge the multiplicity of deprivations and the interrelationship between them. This paper however will focus on the social exclusion of SC children as one key aspect of disparities between children in primary education in India.

Survey	% Completed
NSS 52 (1995-96)	32.8
NSS 55 (1999-00)	36.8
NFHS-II (1998-99)	37.7
RCHS-II (2002-04)	37.8

Using completion rates of five years of schooling as a key indicator of education status, Table 3 shows that SC population are disadvantaged when compared to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) others. It should also be noted that ST children are in some ways even more disadvantaged than SCs in terms of education status. Regarding the accessibility of the education system for ST children, issues such as the language of instruction, remoteness of their habitations, poverty and other factors are barriers to access for this disadvantaged group. While both SC and ST children are disadvantaged, the specific issues related to the social exclusion of SC children from primary education will be the focus of this paper. The tables below will continue to show ST children as a reference.

Table 3: Completion Rate of 10-12 years by caste (RCH 2002-2004)

Social Group	SC	ST	Others
Male	36.3	32.6	44.8
Female	32.3	26.6	44.1

Based on the National Family Health Survey of 1998/99, Table 4 shows that only 65.7% of SC children age 7-17 are currently attending school compared to 81.3% of higher caste groups. Furthermore, 20.8% of SC children never attended school compared to 7.6% of children from high caste.

Table 4: Percent of children age 7-17 by schooling outcomes (NFHS, 1998/99)

Caste/Religion of the household head	Never Attended	Ever attended	
		Dropped out	Currently Attending
Hindu SC	20.8	13.0	65.7
Hindu ST	29.7	13.9	56.3
Hindu other	7.6	10.6	81.3
Other	7.8	10.7	81.1

Table 5 indicates the disparities in rural areas between children from SC castes and also between the poorest 20% compared to the richest 20% of households using data from RCHS-II for boys and girls. This survey defined economic status based on household's ownership of assets such as electric fan, radio/transistor, pressure cooker, telephone, bicycle, car, tractor and water pump among others. The table indicates that SC children are disadvantaged compared to children from other castes in each of the economic groups, but also that the economic status of the household is a very important discriminating factor in accessing education. The table also indicates that girls are disadvantaged compared to boys in the lower economic group, but less so in the higher economic group.

Table 5: % children in 10-12 years age group who have completed at least 5 years of schooling across economic groups and gender in rural areas (RCHS, 2002-2004)

Rural	Male			
	SC	ST	Other	Total
Poorest 20%	23.5	22.9	22.2	22.5
Richest 20%	50.0	56.9	54.2	52.9
Female				
Poorest 20%	17.4	15.5	18.5	16.5
Richest 20%	52.5	45.4	55.1	53.0

The literacy rates of women, SC and ST continue to be below average. Table 7 shows the percentage of the ever-married women by caste who are illiterate in India, and in two selected states: Uttar Pradesh, which is one of the most disadvantaged and Tamil Nadu, which is among the

most advantaged states in India. One can see that there is a significant difference in the level of illiteracy in the two states among all the castes, therefore confirming the significance of disparities between regions in India. However, SC ever-married women were disadvantaged in both states, with 85% of SC women illiterate compared to 57.2% of other higher castes in Uttar Pradesh, and 64.1% of SC women in Tamil Nadu compared to 5.0% of higher castes.

Table 7: Distribution of ever-married women 15-49 who are illiterate: UP, Tamil Nadu and India (NFHS, 1998/99)

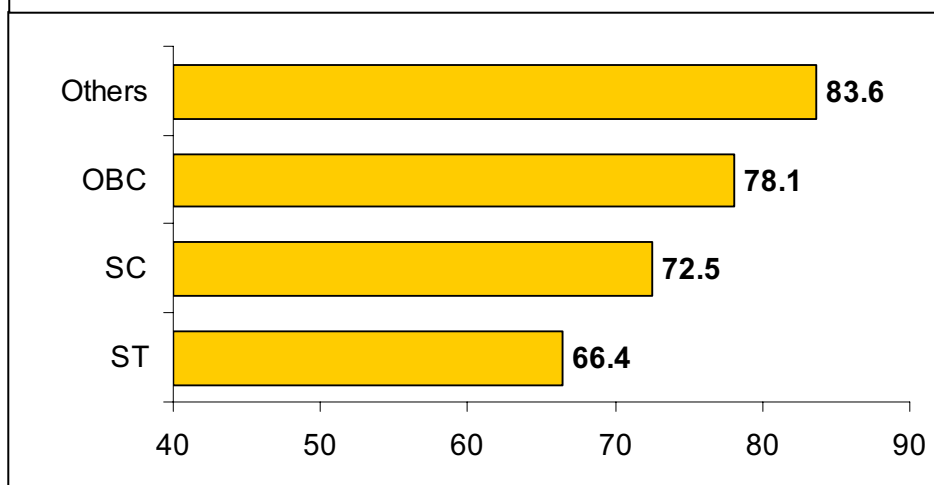
	Tamil Nadu	Uttar Pradesh	India
SC	64.1	85.0	73.0
Others	5.0	57.2	43.8

According to a UNICEF supported Baseline Survey which was undertaken in 2005 by

the National Sample Survey Organization in 43 districts in the country, there are significant disparities in attendance rates and also learning achievements between children from scheduled caste and other castes. Graph 1 indicates the percentage of children (6-14 years) attending school, which is 72.5% for SC compared to 83.6% for children from other castes.

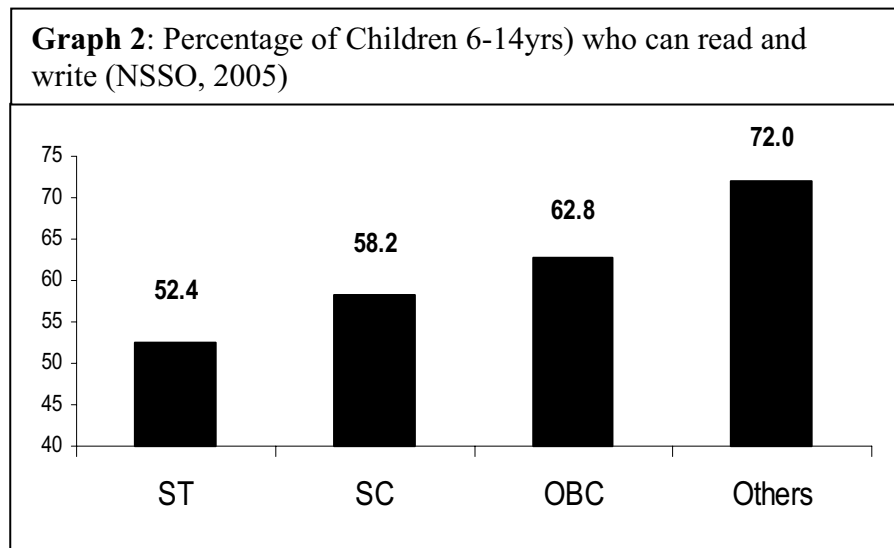
While beyond the scope of this paper, which is focused on social exclusion based on caste, it is interesting to note the lower figure for children of scheduled tribes, which is 66.4%. As mentioned previously, this is

Graph 1: Percentage of Children Attending School (NSSO, 2005)



an indication of the multiple disadvantages which tribal children face including poverty, remoteness and learning in another language.

Graph 2 indicates the percentage of children who can read and write, disaggregated by caste (and also included the tribal children as reference). There is a difference between SC children and children from other castes in the percentage who can read and write, which is 58.2% compared to 72.0% respectively.



Reasons for the Disadvantaged Status of Scheduled Caste Children from Primary Education

Although more data and research are needed regarding the immediate, underlying and structural causes of the disparities in education between castes in India, and also that each region in India has specific characteristics related to this issue, the following section will summarize the key issues which are common throughout the country.

The physical distance to school is often cited as a barrier for children in India particularly at the higher levels of middle and secondary school, and is of particular importance for SC children as they often live in hamlets which are on the outer edge of the village. However, in addition to the physical distance, the ‘social distance’ to the school also needs to be considered. As the Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) report concluded, “In many areas, villages are divided into separate hamlets, and children from one hamlet may be reluctant or unable to go to school in another hamlet due to caste tensions.” (PROBE, 17). Only half of all hamlets (the sub-unit of a village) in rural India have a primary school, and in states like Uttar Pradesh, the proportion of such hamlets is a low as 30 percent (PROBE, 17). In rural villages particularly in disadvantaged states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, SC tend to be clustered in particular habitations within villages. If the school is then located in the central part of the village (or where higher castes reside), then this presents another challenge for SC children in accessing the school. According to a study conducted in 1995, “SC/ST families tend to live in colonies removed by a kilometer or more from the main village. A school in the village within walking distance for the families in the main village would still be at a distance to these children.” (MODE, 1995) Additional analysis based on village level data on the location

of the school and caste composition of the habitations within a village are necessary in order to draw conclusions related to this issue.

Another element of social exclusion of SC children from primary education in India is the extent to which discrimination is practiced by teachers. While reliable quantitative data are not available related to the perception or levels of sensitivity of teachers to caste-based discrimination, anecdotal evidence and certain smaller scale qualitative studies suggest that teaching practices in the classroom negatively affect SC children and result in another 'push' factor from primary school. (Ramachandran, 2004) "Teachers in India are predominantly upper caste and bring their own understandings of the legitimacy of caste relations into the classroom. Dalit children are expected to run errands and are assigned menial tasks such as sweeping and cleaning the classrooms. Higher rates of teacher absenteeism were reported when children were mainly from dalit and tribal communities." (Kabeer, 11).

Recruiting teachers from marginalized communities is an important means of signaling state commitment to making services more accessible to excluded groups. However, not only their background and caste are important, their empathy with children from scheduled caste will affect their behaviour in the classroom, and the resulting education experience of children from scheduled caste. Jha and Jhingran (2005) however noted that "teachers' educational qualifications and their pre-service training are not discriminating factors in teacher performance" in relating to children from disadvantaged backgrounds (page 69). The Joint Review Mission of SSA highlighted the importance of training teachers to "address issues of attitude and classroom practice in order to improve the academic performance of SC children." (Department of Education, 2006, pg. 16) Teachers' empathy with children from diverse or disadvantaged backgrounds is important in providing an education service which is attractive to marginalized groups. More data and analysis are required on the background of teachers including their caste and also their level of sensitivity and skills related to promoting social exclusion and the impact of these characteristics on the education experience of SC children.

The perception of the quality of the education system (which it is reasonable to expect to be somewhat correlated with the actual quality of the system – including the curriculum, pedagogy, etc.), by the parents and students, and their assessment on the benefits of education (will their child get a better job etc.), and the accessibility of the education system (distance, cost etc.) will influence the decision of whether parents decide to send their children to school (and children themselves). As mentioned above, the social status of the child, which is predominantly determined by caste, also influences this assessment. "In a socially and economically stratified society like India, decision-making at the individual level is closely linked with collective or group behaviour. Individual preferences and collective or social norms may not move in the same direction." (Jha and Jhingran, 2005, 26) The above analysis of the additional challenges to accessing education by scheduled caste is a example of the individual aspirations of these children and their parents not matching the social norms of the wider community. This will be further discussed in this paper.

Table 8 indicates the reasons for children never attending or dropping out of school based on the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) -II. Unfortunately, this information is not available for different social groups. The table indicates that cost is a significant barrier to accessing education, which is consistent with other studies including the PROBE study. (PROBE, 17). The high cost of providing education and the lack of interest in studies are given as reasons for nearly 50 per cent of boys in both rural and urban areas for having never attended school. For girls, along with the cost of education, the opportunity cost of attending school was cited as too high; that is, the loss of their contribution to the work at home. While the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) did not collect data related to the specific issues of social exclusion of SC mentioned above, recognizing that children from Scheduled Castes also tend to be poorer than children from other castes, they will be disproportionately affected by this barrier.

Table 8: Reasons for never attending or dropping out of school, children aged 6-17 years, NFHS, 1998-99

Reasons	Males		Females	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Never attended School (%)	6.4	13.6	9.0	25.7
- School far away	1.5	4.4	3.4	5.2
- Education not necessary	6.1	7.8	12.9	13.1
- Required for work at home or outside for cash/kind	12.6	17.1	15.4	24.5
- Costs too much	28.5	25.8	30.1	23.8
- Not interested in studies	26.5	25.7	15.7	15.9
- Other	26.5	17.0	19.7	15.4
- Don't know	3.0	2.0	2.8	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dropped out of school (%)	10.6	10.6	11.0	12.6
- School far away	0.3	1.4	1.2	7.5
- Education not necessary	2.4	2.3	5.4	4.3
- Required for work at home or outside for cash/kind	21.9	28.4	20.8	26.2
- Costs too much	15.2	13.3	17.0	11.4
- Not interested in studies	42.5	40.0	30.2	24.8
- Repeated failures	6.0	5.3	6.1	3.7
- Other*	5.9	5.5	14.3	18.2
- Don't know	5.7	3.8	5.1	4.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In order to try and discern the extent to which social exclusion based on caste is a barrier to education, multilevel regression analysis was undertaken based on the data from the National Family Health Survey 2 (1998/99). Based on this regression, Table 9 shows that for children aged 7-17 years of age, children from other castes are 1.35 times more likely to have ever been to school than SC children. Similarly, children 11-17 years old from higher castes (i.e. neither SC nor OBC), are 1.33 times more likely to complete grade 5 than SC children after controlling for working status, number of children in the family, adult female and male education levels, urban/rural and also the standard of living index.

The following table clearly indicates that caste has a significant influence in the educational status of children.

Table 9: Multilevel model regression for 1) ever been to school 7-17 years of age and 2) completing grade 5 among children age 11-17 years in India (calculations based on NFHS 2, 1998/99)

Caste	Odds Ratio between castes	
	Ever been to school 7-17 years of age	Completing Grade 5 among children age 11-17 years of age
Scheduled caste	1.0	1.0
Other backward classes	1.07	1.1
Other Hindu castes	1.35	1.33

Recent years in India have seen a proliferation of private schools, both aided and unaided, and alternative and education guarantee schemes. Data are limited on the actual number of private schools and also the numbers of children attending these schools. At the primary level, 6 per cent of rural children and 19 per cent of urban children are studying in private unaided schools; this proportion goes up when we include the 31 per cent of children who are studying in private aided schools (World Bank, 2001). Among the reasons for the growth of private schools is the reported decline in government-school quality (poor infrastructure, shortage of teachers, lack of accountability of government schools leading to teacher absenteeism and negligence). This gives way to a positive preference for private schools, even though they may have a relatively poor infrastructure, less qualified teachers and are definitely more expensive (Ramachandran, 2003, PROBE Report 1999). The proliferation of private schools in rural and urban areas has the potential of further widening the divide between castes, as children from Scheduled Castes cannot afford (nor may be welcome) at private schools to the same extent as children from other castes, although this is an area which requires further study. From the little information which is available, one can conclude that the SC children predominantly attend the poorly functioning government schools or alternative schools (Jha and Jhingran, 2005). This situation has however resulted in one district education official commenting that the public school system is slowly turning into a system for SC children only (i.e. children of other castes attend private schools). (Jha and Jhingran, 2005)

Analytical Framework to Address Social Exclusion in Primary Education

With the significant increase in public resources to primary education, and the increased attention more generally both of senior decision-makers and the public, there is now a unique opportunity to transform the education system in India, with the potential of inducing fundamental changes in the opportunities to socially disadvantaged populations in the country. An improved education system may be one of the key ingredients to breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation to scheduled caste children in India. During

the 1990s, the focus on improving access and quality of education was on increasing public resources to education and addressing the poor quality of teaching. It is however now widely recognized that finances alone will not ensure regular attendance of the most disadvantaged. Explanations of educational disadvantage, particularly in the context of gender and social attributes often focus on the supply dimensions of the problem, which again often emphasize the necessity of providing additional resources (Ramachandran, 2004). A broader approach however is needed for education policy and resulting programmes to effectively address social exclusion of SC children from primary school. A more comprehensive approach is therefore proposed which highlights the various inter-related processes which influence decision-making at various levels related to a child's education.

In order to better understand social exclusion of scheduled caste from education, it is important to develop a framework which would help to categorize the factors which influence the decision to attend (or not attend) school and to understand who takes this decision. Diagram 1 illustrates the proposed framework which includes 1) characteristics and processes within the school (i.e. teaching processes, school environment, background of teachers, discriminatory practices etc.), 2) processes within the community (i.e. social dynamics, inclusive decision-making, social norms within the community related to education etc.), and 3) household characteristics and related processes (i.e. caste, poverty, gender, numbers of children, nutrition, educational level and occupation of parents, value places on education etc.). Each of these elements affect a child's chances of accessing school, regularly attending, completing and ultimately, achieving a certain level of learning.

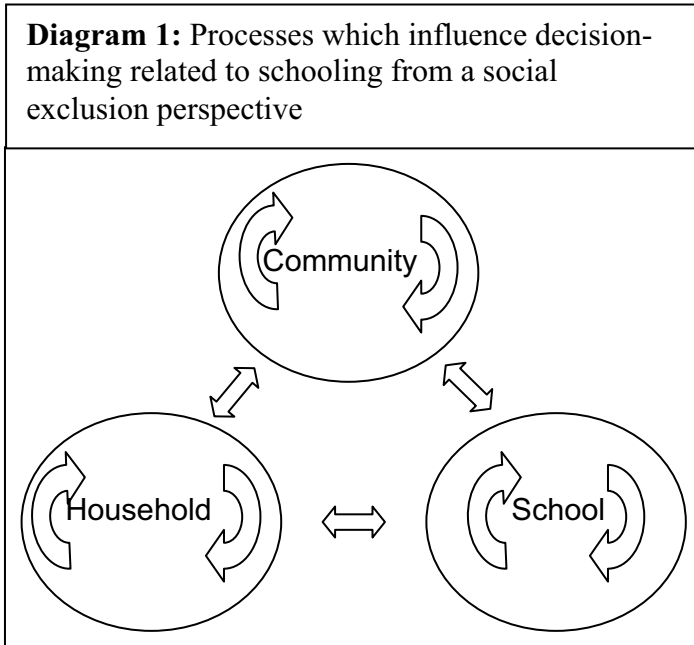


Diagram 1 illustrates the proposed framework which includes 1) characteristics and processes within the school (i.e. teaching processes, school environment, background of teachers, discriminatory practices etc.), 2) processes within the community (i.e. social dynamics, inclusive decision-making, social norms within the community related to education etc.), and 3) household characteristics and related processes (i.e. caste, poverty, gender, numbers of children, nutrition, educational level and occupation of parents, value places on education etc.). Each of these elements affect a child's chances of accessing school, regularly attending, completing and ultimately, achieving a certain level of learning.

The processes within each of these components are not independent of each other, and therefore the relationship and interplay between them also influences the education status of SC children (illustrated by the arrows between the circles). The relationship and interplay between the school, community and household is important in understanding the decision-making processes related to a child's attendance. That is, there is an interplay between life situations, school functioning, classroom processes, community norms, parental aspirations and other factors which have an influence on educational outcomes of disadvantaged groups (Jha,12). For example, recognizing that teachers are a part of the community and therefore are influenced by societal norms, it is clear that prejudices within the community would have an influence on teachers' attitude and possibly their teaching practice towards SC children.

Another example of the interplay is the perception of the quality and accessibility of education by the parents, which correlates with the actual quality of the school system but is also formed based on the expectations of parents and the societal norm or “lens” they apply when assessing the education experience of their children. The extent the community is involved in the management of the school, and the level of diversity and inclusiveness of this process, is also an important factor and relates to the interplay between households and the school. Similarly, the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers, and how that relationship is influenced by caste, is another example of the interplay between households and schools. Unfortunately, very little is known about how the influence of various characteristics of households, schools and communities, and their interplay, influences social exclusion of SC children from primary school. Further study on the various interrelationships between these elements and their influence on children’s education status is necessary in order to better understand and therefore be able to address the main determinants of the social exclusion of SC children.

Jha and Jhingran (2005) make the distinction between the individual decision-making (children and their parents) regarding sending children to school, and the institutional decision-making process, including deciding on the level of resources which are provided to the education system. To realize a policy objective of ensuring all children are in school, including those who are socially excluded, it is necessary that policies and programmes are built on a comprehensive understanding of the decision-making processes at the various levels, and when necessary influence these in a desired direction. (Jha and Jhingran, 2005, 26). They wrote “it was clear that the voicelessness and powerlessness of poor people also affects the relationship between poor parents and schools” (Jha and Jhingran, 2005, 66).

Policy Implications and Conclusions

The Government of India has repeatedly acknowledged the disadvantaged status of the SC population in education and recognized the need to address it. The National Policy on Education (1986) declared “The central focus in the SC’s educational development is their equalization with the non-SC population in all stages and levels of education” (GOI, 1986). The policy focused on incentives, scholarships, reservations, recruitment of teachers, location of school buildings and ‘constant micro-planning and verification to ensure that the enrolment, retention and successful completion of SC students’ (GOI, 1986). However, the situation of SC children has continued to lag significantly behind the national average, indicating either a failure in the implementation of national policies and programmes to address the situation, or a problem in the model or approach to addressing the issue.

In the recently finalized Approach Paper to the 11th Five Year Plan of the Government of India, which will provide the overall framework for the Government’s work from 2007-2011, the Government reiterated its commitment to addressing disparities in education between castes. The Approach Paper states the following:

“Development and empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups is a commitment enshrined in the Constitution, and education is the most effective instrument of social empowerment. Schemes for the educational uplift of the SCs and STs have borne fruit although the gap between the general population and SCs and STs are still at unacceptable levels....Some minorities have fallen far behind the national average in education. It will be necessary to go to the root of the problem and examine the reasons for the decline so that remedial measures can be taken during the 11th Plan.” (Planning Commission, 2006, 64)

In India, there have been various schemes and programmes which have been introduced to bridge the divide between SC children and other children in primary school. A summary list of the schemes and programmes in India related to education and caste is included in Annex 2. These can be categorized into initiatives which focus on the supply side (i.e. making schools more accessible, improve quality or providing a supplementary service for SC children) and initiatives which promote greater demand for education (i.e. by providing incentives). Regarding supply side interventions, there are two basic approaches to addressing social exclusion in education, targeting excluded groups with supplementary service or focusing on universal improvements of the system. “Universalist approaches are essential to building a sense of social solidarity and citizenship.” (Kabeer, 14) Targeted programmes have generally served as a means of compensating for government weakness in delivering on universal services, and may actually be marginalizing those they are intending to reach if they result in labeling of particular groups and don’t act as a bridge to mainstream education services. Kabeer (2006) concludes that such approaches “need to go beyond ‘ameliorative’ approaches that address the symptoms of the problem to ‘transformative’ approaches that address its causes.” (Kabeer, 16)

During the 1990s, the focus of the large-scale District Primary Education Programme and more recently the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (“Universal Primary Education Campaign”) was on addressing the inadequate budgetary resources and the poor quality of teaching, which were regarded as two key constraints to achieving universal participation. However, while it is obvious that universal elementary education demands a significant increase in financial allocation, it is also evident both from the experience in India but also based on global experience that finances alone will not ensure attendance of disadvantaged populations. One of the development objectives of the SSA is “enrolment of children of SC and ST will be near parity with that of other groups”, which in itself is a relatively modest objective as it focuses on enrollment, rather than completion of learning achievements, and also mentions “near parity” rather than parity. However, the approach the programme has adopted is not sufficiently comprehensive in addressing the above mentioned constraints and will therefore fail to influence the relevant decision-making processes which relates to a child’s education status, particularly related to the issues faced by SC children.

In addition to this large-scale national scheme, regarding demand-side interventions, various States make special provisions for SCs by providing financial schemes, scholarships, special hostels, concessions in fees and grants for books (de Haan, 2005). While a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the various programmes and interventions in India is beyond the scope of this paper, based on the above analytical framework, certain conclusions can be drawn for consideration.

Addressing social exclusion requires a holistic approach which promotes involvement of excluded populations in community life; ensures access to all basic services; promotes behaviour change; increases income and addresses other key elements of exclusion. Similarly in education, a holistic approach is necessary based on an analysis of the various components of the decision-making process related to regularly attending school for an SC child and, from the supply side, all elements of the education experience must be addressed. This obviously entails a **multi-sectoral response** which is broader than education alone, as the challenge of social exclusion does not only exist in the education sector (as mentioned above), and factors outside the education sector will relate to the education opportunities available to SC children. A comprehensive response will also need to be context-specific, with the need for innovative programmes to bring and keep children into the mainstream school system by making schooling attractive to them and also worthwhile for the parents. A **comprehensive and context specific strategy** must be adopted, which is often not the case with existing programmes and policies in India. For example, many of the schemes which focus on increasing demand for education, such as providing text books and uniforms and/or a conditional cash transfer for SC children, do not address other factors within the household related to the decision-making process or to the other factors related to the school or the community. The above conclusion is consistent with the outcome of the Joint Review Mission of the SSA in 2006 which stated that “in certain groups like SC, ST and minority children, the number of out-of-school children is still high. It is necessary to identify specific contextual aspects including socio-cultural reasons that inhibit the enrolment and retention of these groups. The requires building of appropriate capacity and resource support at the sub-district level to develop relevant strategies and interventions.” (Department of Education, 2006, pg. 2)

While the global literature on conditional cash transfers highlights the importance of addressing supply-side constraints (i.e. the education system) at the same time or as a prerequisite to influencing the demand-side with a conditional cash transfer (CCT), the other determinants discussed above must also be addressed if a CCT is to be effective. A CCT implemented as a vertical, isolated intervention, without a more comprehensive response may actually result in negative consequences if children increase their attendance in schools or communities that do not meet at least a minimum level of acceptability for SC children from a social exclusion perspective. For example, if SC children are faced with discriminatory practices within the classroom, or within the community more generally on the way to school, negative results may be realized as a result of a programme which focuses only on stimulating demand.

In order to address all of the determinants of social exclusion, it is important for any intervention designed to reduce disparities to include **strengthening local capacity to**

manage a comprehensive response. This will ensure that that approach is context-specific and addresses the local particular determinants and dynamics of exclusion which exist within a community. This is of particular relevant to caste issues in India and the forms of exclusion, recognizing that the nature of the caste relationship varies greatly between regions and communities (Shah, 2006). It is therefore necessary for any strategy to include the facilitation of a process in which communities undertake an analysis of causes and factors which lead to social exclusion of children from primary school and develop a comprehensive response. Consistent with a human rights based approach, both the nature of the process of addressing this issue, as well as the results itself, are factors which should be prioritized. The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, which was enacted in 1992, delegated various powers and responsibilities to the locally elected bodies called the Panchayats, which provides a platform for strengthening a broader process to address social exclusion. One of the main recommendations from the review of SSA in 2006 was “Greater use of Innovation Funds should be encouraged for interventions to boost the performance of first generation learners, especially SC and ST children and older girls”. (Department of Education, 2006, pg. 5). The innovation funds should be managed locally and based on an analysis of the barriers faced by SC children within the household, the community and in the school (and the interplays between these).

Encouraging the enrollment of SC children in the problem-solving and solution process, and also the care-givers in a community level process may in itself contribute to positive change at community level. Similarly, encouraging **children themselves to participate in the management of the school**, and also reaching children who are not attending, and promoting the diversity of this participation by ensuring that SC children participate in the process, could be a significant step towards making schools more inclusive. The “Child Cabinet” initiative supported as part of the UNICEF Quality Education Package is one such opportunity and while not yet evaluated, is showing some positive signs of contributing to children’s involvement in the management of the school. It however does not include the stipulation of ensuring that the cabinet is made up of children from various castes (and other characteristics), and therefore will not necessarily address issues related to social exclusion.

Another element in a comprehensive response to addressing social exclusion in primary education is the **importance of reaching children at a very young age**, as issues related to social exclusion summarized above are more difficult to address as children become older. The literature on the importance of early childhood development is well developed (see UNICEF, 2005), and is particularly relevant to the issue of social exclusion in primary education for two reasons. First, in order for children to perform effectively in primary school, they must have an enabling environment and be adequately prepared, which includes having access to early childhood development opportunities either within or outside the home. This can be one of the most effective means of “leveling the playing field” for excluded children. Secondly, social discrimination is a learned behavior, as evidenced by the fact that young children do not hold prejudices which exist in the society as a whole. Therefore, intervening at the household, community and school level as early as possible, preferably before the time a child learns discriminatory norms held in the community, would be more effective than attempting to have children “unlearn”

these processes later. One way this could be achieved in India is by broadening the mandate of the Department of Education (DoE) to include providing educational opportunities and other forms of support to 3-6 year olds. This is currently the mandate of the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), which manages the Integrated Child Development Scheme which is intended to reach children from 3-6 years old with learning opportunities (and also younger children with other services). By shifting this responsibility from DWCD to DoE, the educational continuum beginning with the young child would be more integrated, proactive system of addressing social exclusion by reaching younger children with educational service.

Information regarding the level of exclusion of SC children from education is necessary to enable an effective management process at local level. The attendance of socially excluded children, such as the scheduled caste, tends to be more irregular than other children and therefore moving beyond enrollment data, to focus instead on retention, transition, average years of schooling data, and most importantly completion rates and assessment of basic learning competencies, disaggregated by caste (and gender, other social groupings) is necessary in order to assess and monitor the capacity of the education system to reach and provided a quality service to traditionally excluded groups.. **Strengthening data management systems which provide disaggregated data by caste, gender and other characteristics at local level** is therefore necessary. This data must be complemented by data on dropouts and on those how have never attended school (Ramachandran, 2004, 23). However, this level of disaggregation is often not currently included in either routine government monitoring systems (such as the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of DPEP, or the District Information System for Education (DISE of SSA) or surveys which collect information on education indicators. Strengthening the generation and use of data, including placing it in the public domain, would complement the recent positive developments related to expanding the power and use of the “Right to Information” Act, which promotes the availability and use of information related to government services (and other information) to the public. It would also be important to include private schools in this equation, recognizing the trend discussed above regarding children (particularly boys belonging to higher caste) being sent to private school.

A comprehensive, context specific, participatory process which includes reaching young children would go a long way in addressing social exclusion of SC children from primary education in India. Programmes which improve only the supply-side or the demand-side, or even those which address both but are not based on a more comprehensive analysis of the factors which influence the various decision-making processes related to a child’s education status, will not be comprehensive enough to address this multi-faceted and long-standing issue which continues to exclude SC children from the education system.

Annex 1: Table 7: Percentage of SC Population, Children age 6-13 years attending school and percentage of population below poverty line for Total and SC Population

Sr. No.	India /State	Percentage of SC population	Percentage of Children attending school						Population (rural)	
			Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Total	Scheduled Castes below poverty line
	INDIA	16.2	71.5	74.9	67.8	68.1	72.1	63.8	37.3	48.1
1	JAMMU & KASHMIR	7.6	65.3	70.3	60.1	74.9	78.8	70.6	NA	NA
2	HIMACHAL PRADESH	24.7	91.7	92.5	90.7	90.0	91.2	88.8	30.3	36.9
3	PUNJAB	28.9	81.1	82.1	79.8	73.3	74.8	71.5	12.0	22.1
4	CHANDIGARH	17.5	85.4	86.2	84.4	78.6	80.3	76.7	NA	NA
5	UTTARANCHAL	17.9	82.6	84.6	80.4	81.5	84.1	78.7	NA	NA
6	HARYANA	19.3	79.2	81.9	76.2	71.6	74.8	68.0	28.0	46.6
7	DELHI	16.9	84.3	84.8	83.6	81.0	82.1	79.8	NA	NA
8	RAJASTHAN	17.2	71.6	79.8	62.4	65.5	74.5	55.1	26.5	33.4
9	UTTAR PRADESH	21.1	63.5	68.0	58.3	62.7	67.6	57.1	42.3	59.0
10	BIHAR	15.7	46.8	52.6	40.4	32.5	39.0	25.0	58.2	70.7
11	SIKKIM	5.0	82.0	82.6	81.4	78.3	79.2	77.4	NA	NA
12	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	0.6	59.4	63.0	55.6	69.9	72.2	67.5	NA	NA
13	NAGALAND	NSC	70.4	71.2	69.4	NSC	NSC	NSC	NA	NA
14	MANIPUR	2.8	78.6	80.0	77.2	84.0	84.4	83.7	NA	NA
15	MIZORAM	NSC	82.0	82.6	81.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	NA	NA
16	TRIPURA	17.4	76.8	78.6	75.0	81.6	82.7	80.3	NA	NA
17	MEGHALAYA	0.5	58.2	57.1	59.3	52.7	55.2	50.0	NA	NA
18	ASSAM	6.9	64.0	65.6	62.4	70.4	72.4	68.4	45.0	45.4
19	WEST BENGAL	23.0	71.5	72.8	70.1	70.0	73.0	66.9	40.8	45.3
20	JHARKHAND	11.8	57.4	63.1	51.2	44.2	51.3	36.4	NA	NA
21	ORISSA	16.5	70.2	74.3	65.9	67.6	72.7	62.3	49.7	49.0
22	CHHATTISGARH	11.6	75.5	79.3	71.5	78.2	81.9	74.3	NA	NA
23	MADHYA PRADESH	15.2	71.6	76.0	66.8	72.2	76.7	67.1	40.6	45.8
24	GUJARAT	7.1	77.3	81.0	73.0	83.0	85.7	80.0	22.2	32.3
25	DAMAN & DIU	3.1	87.6	88.6	86.5	91.8	92.1	91.6	NA	NA
26	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1.9	69.6	76.6	62.0	85.1	87.0	83.1	NA	NA

27	MAHARASHTRA	10.2	86.7	87.7	85.5	86.8	88.0	85.5	37.9	51.6
28	ANDHRA PRADESH	16.2	79.4	82.4	76.2	78.6	82.4	74.6	15.9	26.0
29	KARNATAKA	16.2	77.9	79.9	75.8	71.9	75.6	68.1	29.9	46.4
30	GOA	1.8	90.6	91.3	89.8	87.7	88.6	86.8	NA	NA
31	LAKSHADWEEP	NSC	95.0	95.5	94.5	NSC	NSC	NSC	NA	NA
32	KERALA	9.8	95.0	94.9	95.0	94.5	94.4	94.6	25.7	36.4
33	TAMIL NADU	19	88.7	89.4	88.1	88.3	89.0	87.4	32.5	44.1
34	PONDICHERY	16.2	93.8	94.1	93.6	93.5	93.8	93.2	NA	NA
35	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	NSC	87.0	87.6	86.4	NSC	NSC	NSC	NA	NA

Notes

NSC- No Scheduled Castes notified

NST - No Scheduled Tribe notified

SC proportion and percentage of children age 6-13 years attending school- Source Census 2001

Poverty Estimates 1993-94 Source - Planning Commission

For poverty estimates UP includes Uttaranchal, Bihar includes Jharkhand and MP includes Chattisgarh

Annex 2: Primary Classes Dropout and decrease in %age points

Sl. No.	State/ UTs	Dropout (I-V)		Decrease in % age points	Dropout (I-V)		Decrease in % age points	Dropout (I-V)		Decrease in % age points
		All categories	2002-03		Scheduled Caste	2002-03		Scheduled Tribe	2002-03	
		1996-97	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2									
1	Andhra Pradesh	46.71	41.71	5.00	55.45	46.63	8.82	74.26	65.82	8.44
2	Arunachal Pradesh	51.55	37.94	13.61	-	-	-	57.84	44.41	13.42
3	Assam	54.95	61.17	-6.22	51.78	48.80	2.98	63.06	56.72	6.35
4	Bihar	59.10	62.31	-3.21	63.46	58.81	4.65	64.50	66.13	-1.64
5	Chattisgarh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Goa	6.06	2.69	3.37	48.37	35.13	13.23	-	-	-
7	Gujarat	41.94	24.77	17.16	44.50	26.44	18.06	57.28	39.32	17.96
8	Haryana	18.55	6.89	11.66	28.54	25.32	3.22	0.00	0.00	0.00
9	Himachal Pradesh	26.94	12.42	14.53	27.10	20.02	7.08	41.32	18.95	22.37
10	Jammu & Kashmir	22.08	24.82	-2.74	37.59	25.72	11.87	-	41.76	-
11	Jharkhand	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	Karnataka	42.18	18.74	23.44	46.77	18.14	28.62	38.48	6.13	32.36
13	Kerala	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18.93	4.01	14.92
14	Madhya Pradesh	27.71	31.43	-3.72	28.40	35.00	-6.60	45.56	51.30	-5.74
15	Maharashtra	22.41	15.55	6.86	28.69	8.68	20.01	46.89	34.21	12.69
16	Manipur	42.46	25.60	16.86	63.14	40.51	22.63	57.16	45.23	11.93
17	Meghalaya	60.87	56.51	4.37	55.93	70.33	-14.40	58.13	60.36	-2.23

Sl. No.	State/ UTs	Dropout (I-V)		Decrease in % age points	Dropout (I-V)		Decrease in % age points	Dropout (I-V)		Decrease in % age points
		All categories			Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe		
		1996-97	2002-03	1996-97	2002-03	1996-97	2002-03	1996-97	2002-03	
18	Mizoram	58.10	56.38	1.73	-	-	-	58.39	55.43	2.96
19	Nagaland	31.47	51.80	-20.33	-	-	-	41.28	37.21	4.06
20	Orissa	50.59	46.13	4.46	55.42	36.48	18.94	69.97	56.28	13.69
21	Punjab	22.31	25.29	-2.98	31.81	31.78	0.03	-	-	-
22	Rajasthan	56.51	56.93	-0.42	57.43	53.82	3.62	65.36	54.31	11.04
23	Sikkim	58.88	52.06	6.82	64.84	53.85	11.00	55.40	43.84	11.56
24	Tamil Nadu	15.06	15.37	-0.31	12.52	33.53	-21.01	30.02	24.41	5.61
25	Tripura	54.35	42.97	11.38	51.44	36.37	15.07	70.16	59.60	10.56
26	Uttar Pradesh	39.55	23.55	16.01	31.63	51.02	-19.39	27.25	30.69	-3.44
27	Uttaranchal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	West Bengal	54.85	36.41	18.44	61.71	52.32	9.39	35.93	55.54	-19.61
29	A&N Islands	20.37	2.31	18.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	28.36	17.56	10.80
30	Chandigarh	1.39	30.44	-29.05	16.95	14.33	2.62	0.00	0.00	0.00
31	D&N Haveli	38.53	24.82	13.71	20.22	33.60	-13.38	44.74	31.52	13.21
32	Daman & Diu	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.01	-4.01
33	Delhi	0.00	12.13	-	9.33	15.85	-6.52	-	-	-
34	Lakshadweep	13.33	3.03	10.30	-	-	-	14.15	0.00	14.15
35	Pondicherry	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	-	-
	INDIA	40.20	34.89	5.31	42.74	41.47	1.27	56.54	51.37	5.17

Source: Selected Educational statistics-2002, Education in India-1996-97(School Education)

Annex 2: Special provisions/incentives for education of SCx/STs in India¹

The following special provisions for SCs and STs have been incorporated in the existing schemes of the Departments of Elementary Education & Literacy and Secondary & Higher Education:

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) aims to provide useful and quality elementary education to all children in the 6-14 age group by 2010 in the country.
- Relaxed norms for opening of primary schools: A primary school within 1 km walking distance from habitations of 200 population instead of habitations of 300 population.
- Priority is given to the areas of concentration of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the programmes of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Lok Jumbish (LJ), Shiksha Karmi (SK), Non-Formal Education (NFE) and National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education.
- Under the Scheme of Strengthening of Boarding and Hostel facilities for girl students of Secondary & Higher Secondary Schools preference is given to girl hostels located in educationally backward districts, particularly those predominantly inhabited by SC, ST and educationally backward communities.
- The scheme of Kasturba Gandhi Swatantrata Vidyalaya is to improve literacy among the women belonging to SCs, STs, OBCs & Minorities.
- The Mahila Samakhya (MS) programme enables women, especially from socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalized groups to address and deal with problems of isolation, lack of self-confidence and oppressive social customs.
- The higher educational institutions administered by the Central Government reserve 15% seats for Scheduled Castes and 7.5% for Scheduled Tribes in case of admissions as well as in appointments (teaching & non teaching posts). Seats are also reserved in hostels attached to the Central universities/colleges.
- Abolition of tuition fee in all States in Government Schools at least up to upper primary level. Most of the states have abolished tuition fee for SC/ST students up to senior secondary level.
- Providing various incentives like free textbooks, uniforms, stationary, school bags for SC/STsetc.
- There is 15% reservation of seats for SCs and 7.5% for STs in Central Government Technical educational institutions including IITs, IIMs, Regional Engineering Colleges, etc. Apart from reservation, there is also relaxation in the minimum qualifying marks for admissions for SCs & STs. There is fee exemption, book bank facility and scholarships in IITs.
- Relaxation in the minimum qualifying cut off stages for admission in Universities, Colleges and Technical Institutions, apart from reservation.

¹ From an analysis by the Task Group on Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on selected items in the National Common Minimum Programme (2004-2005)

- University Grants Commission provides relaxation of 5% from 55% to 50% at the Master's level for appointment as Lecturer from SC/ST.
- UGC has established SC/ST Cells in 113 Universities including Central Universities to ensure proper implementation of the reservation policy.
- Kendriya Vidyalayas provide 15% reservation for SCs and 7.5% for STs. Norms are relaxed in admissions, if necessary and tuition fee is exempted.
- Navodaya Vidyalayas provide reservation of seats in admissions for SC & ST students in proportion to their population in the District subject to the national minimum i.e. 15% and 7.5% for SCs and STs respectively.
- Out of 43,000 scholarships at the secondary stage for talented children from rural areas 13,000 scholarships are awarded to SC/ST students. Out of 1000 scholarships, 225 scholarships are exclusively reserved for SC/ST students under the National Talent Search Scheme.
- Development of Indian Languages by CIIL, Mysore through research, manpower, production of materials in modern Indian Languages including tribal languages.
- 244 districts have been Identified as special focus districts on cross matching basis from among those, consisting of areas of Minority Concentration blocks/tehsils, ITDP blocks, Schedule V & Scheduled VI areas and districts with SC female literacy less than 10% for focused attention by Centre as well as by States/Union Territories in implementation of Programmes/Schemes.
- Allocation 15% and 7.5% funds on notional basis from the budget of the Department of Elementary Education & Literacy and Secondary & Higher Education under the Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively.

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