GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LITERACY
**LOK SABHA**
**STARRED QUESTION NO. 3**
ANSWERED ON 25TH NOVEMBER, 2024

## Disparities in Educational and Digital Infrastructure in Urban and Rural Schools

*3. Shri Hibi Eden:

Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the recent reports highlighting severe disparities in educational and digital infrastructure, such as internet connectivity and device accessibility between urban and rural schools;
(b) the details of the initiatives being undertaken to ensure equitable digital access across rural areas;
(c) whether any specific programmes have been introduced/launched by the Government to improve school infrastructure including basic facilities like classrooms, libraries, sanitation and laboratories in rural regions and the funds allocated for this purpose;
(d) the details of the data on the availability of qualified teachers in rural schools compared to urban counterparts;
(e) whether there are any plans to incentivize teacher placements in underserved rural areas to bridge this gap;
(f) the details of the impact of such a divide on student performance and outcomes; and
(g) whether the Government has any roadmap to monitor and reduce dropout rates of students in rural schools, particularly girl students?

## ANSWER

MINISTER OF EDUCATION
(SHRI DHARMENDRA PRADHAN)

(a) to (g): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (g) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 3 ANSWERED ON 25TH NOVEMBER, 2024 ASKED BY HON'BLE MP SHRI HIBI EDEN REGARDING DISPARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS**

(a)**:** As per UDISE+ 2021-22, the availability of Educational and Digital infrastructure in urban and rural schools is as under:

| Component | Rural Area (Physical No.) | Urban Area (Physical No.) |
|---|---|---|
| Total Schools | 1234788 | 254327 |
| Drinking Water | 1210348 | 252322 |
| Boys toilet | 1167874 | 238554 |
| Girls toilet | 1194125 | 245794 |
| Ramp | 909307 | 160488 |
| Electricity | 1083569 | 246736 |
| Playground | 935109 | 210858 |
| Library/Book bank/Reading Corner | 1074617 | 225312 |
| Furniture | 826581 | 212587 |
| Classroom (Total) | 7122314 | 2865237 |
| **Digital Infrastructure (For Class VI to XII)** | | |
| Total Schools | 553894 | 174761 |
| ICT Labs | 68305 | 17877 |
| Smart Classrooms | 86798 | 43906 |
| Internet facility | 228057 | 120257 |
| Tinkering Labs | 15482 | 11056 |

**Source: UDISE+ 2021-22**

(b): Details of initiative being undertaken to ensure equitable digital access across rural areas are annexed at **Annexure.**

(c): The Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education is implementing Samagra Shiksha from 2018-19 across the entire country. The scheme has been aligned with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. It aims to ensure that all children have access to quality education with an equitable and inclusive classroom environment which should take care of their diverse background, multilingual needs, different academic abilities and make them active participants in a continuous learning process.

Under Samagra Shiksha, States/UTs are supported for strengthening of school infrastructure such as classrooms, libraries, sanitation, Laboratories etc. As per PRABANDH 2018-19 to 2023-24, the fund allocated for infrastructure in rural schools for major components is as under:

| Sl. No. | Component | Allocation of Fund (Rs in Lakhs) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Classrooms, Laboratories, Library etc | 672956.09 |
| 2 | Boys and Girls Toilets | 211132.57 |
| 3 | Drinking Facilities | 37479.35 |
| 4 | Ramp | 12096.41 |
| 5 | Electricity | 37102.76 |
| | **Total** | **970767.18** |

**Source: PRABANDH (2018-19-2023-24)**

(d): As per Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), 2021-22, out of 66.63 lakh teachers in rural schools, 58.55 lakh (87.9%) are qualified teachers. Further, out of 28.43 lakh teachers in urban schools 24.70 lakhs (86.9%) are qualified teachers.

(e): Recruitment of teachers, their service conditions and deployment come under the purview of the respective State Governments and Union Territory administrations. Recruitment is a continuous process and vacancies get generated due to a number of factors like retirement, resignation, increased requirement of teachers as a result of the enhanced students' strength. The Department of School Education and Literacy, from time to time, through review meetings and advisories, requests the State Governments and UT administrations to fill up these vacancies through Autonomous Teacher Recruitment Board and their rational deployment. Further, the Central Government through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Samagra Shiksha provides financial assistance to the States and UTs to maintain appropriate Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) for various levels of schooling.

(f): The National Achievement Survey conducted in 2017 and 2021 has not shown much significant differences in the level of Achievements between Urban and Rural Schools. The availability of resources in terms of digital divide between urban and rural areas has not been studied under this survey.

(g): Under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, financial assistance is provided to States and UTs for undertaking various activities for reducing dropout rate such as: -

i) opening/strengthening of new schools upto senior secondary level;
ii) construction of school buildings & additional classrooms;
iii) setting up, upgradation and running of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas;
iv) setting up of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Avasiya Vidyalayas;
v) construction of hostels under PM Janman and DA-JGUA scheme;
vi) free uniforms, free text books and transport allowance as per entitlement;
vii) undertaking enrolment & retention drives;
viii) provision of stipend for CWSN girls - Rs. 200 per month for 10 months and
viii) provisions of incinerators and sanitary pad vending machines have been made at appropriate locations.

Further, special training for age-appropriate admission of out of school children and residential as well as non-residential training for older children, seasonal hostels / residential camps, special training centres at worksites, transport/ escort facility are also supported to bring out of school children to the formal schooling system. Further, Government has also taken initiatives such as Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK) and implementation of APAAR ID to monitor the drop out and other education indicators.

VSK has been developed with strategies designed to enhance the effectiveness of monitoring of educational initiatives and their eventual outcomes. A key feature of VSK is tracking of dropout students, monitoring of students migrating from one school to the other, progress of learning outcomes and real-time monitoring of various interventions, aimed at improving access, students' academic performance and enhancing teachers' accountability in schools. Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR), as part of the 'One Nation, One Student ID' programme, is a 12-digit lifelong student ID that is linked to Aadhar under a consented framework, as per provisions of the Aadhar Act.

These two initiatives are designed to bring about transformational and paradigm shift in monitoring and reducing drop-out rates of students.

******

**ANNEXURE**

**ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (b) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 3 ANSWERED ON 25TH NOVEMBER, 2024 ASKED BY HON'BLE MP SHRI HIBI EDEN REGARDING DISPARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS**

To ensure equitable digital access across rural areas, a comprehensive initiative called PM e-VIDYA is underway which unifies all efforts related to e-education including digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. The key components of this initiative are:-

- DIKSHA - the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in States/UTs and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades **(one nation, one digital platform).** DIKSHA currently hosts 7,080+ textbooks energized with QR codes, including 374 NCERT textbooks and ETBs.
- DTH TV Channels - As per the Union Budget announcement for Financial Year 2022-23, the 12 DTH Channels have been expanded to 200 PM eVidya DTH TV Channels to enable all States/UTs to provide supplementary education in various Indian languages for classes 1-12. The channels have been allocated to the States/UTs and Autonomous bodies under MoE and other ministries and are operational.
- Extensive use of Radio, Community Radio and CBSE Podcast- Shiksha Vani.
- Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language. This is available on NIOS website/ YouTube.

To promote, crucial and critical thinking skill, a vertical on Virtual Labs has also been created on DIKSHA platform. 280 Virtual Labs for Science and Mathematics for subjects Class 6th to 12th have been made available. Training on Virtual labs has been conducted through PM eVidya DTH TV channels for teachers and teacher educators across the country.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational stage (NCF-FS) 2022 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023 emphasize on using of child's mother tongue, home language, local language, or regional language for teaching and learning at all stages of school education and higher education. Therefore, to promote language learning among young and adult learners, primers—instructional materials in book form (print or digital) are designed. Such resources facilitate reading and writing—which are crucial inputs for strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) among young and adult learners in a specific language. Subsequently, National Council of Educational Research & Training (NCERT), New Delhi and Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore, have developed a total number of 79 primers and have been launched by the Ministry of Education including **67** tribal languages.
These Primers have been uploaded on NCERT web portal: https://ncert.nic.in/primers.php?ln=en and DIKSHA portals.

The State Governments have been advised to act based on the situation prevailing at every place to meet the demands of students and teachers for providing them with the digital access required for teaching learning digitally.

ICT and Digital Initiatives component of Samagra Shiksha covers Government and Aided Schools having classes VI to XII. Under this component financial assistance is provided for establishing ICT Lab and Smart Classrooms in schools. The non- recurring/recurring grant under 'ICT and Digital Initiatives' is available to the States and UTs for following two options:

**(i) Option I:** Under this option schools which have not availed the ICT facility earlier can either opt for ICT or smart classrooms as per their requirement and need. In case of more than 700 enrolment, an additional ICT lab can also be considered. States/UTs have flexibility to procure hardware such as tablets/ laptops/notebooks/ integrated teaching learning devices and open source operating system as well as Hardware, Software, training and resource support. This would include support for digital boards, smart classrooms, virtual classrooms and DTH channels on pro-rata basis for number of schools approved.

**(ii) Option II**: Under this option schools which have already availed the ICT facility earlier can avail smart classrooms/tablets as per the norms of the scheme.

**Financial Provisions:**

**ICT Lab:** a non-recurring grant of up to Rs. 6.40 lakh per school and recurring grant of upto Rs. 2.40 lakh per school per annum for a period of 5 years.

From 2023-24, the scheme also offers step-wise funding based on school enrolment. (Strength < 100: Rs. 2.5 Lakhs, Strength between 100 – 250: Rs. 4.5 Lakhs, Strength between 250 – 700: Rs. 6.4 Lakhs)

**Smart Classrooms:** The non-recurring grant for Smart Class rooms (2 smart classrooms per school) is of Rs. 2.40 lakh and the recurring grant is Rs. 38,000/- per school per annum (including E Content and Digital Resources, Charges for Electricity.

For internet connectivity, an advisory has been issued by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Government of India to all the States and UTs to enter into an MoU/ Agreement with BSNL and provide FTTH Internet connection to all the Government Schools which have computing devices. States/ UTs have been advised that the Internet Charges can be met from the following:

(a) For ICT Labs/ Smart Class rooms sanctioned under Samagra Shiksha, recurring charges are being released under Samagra Shiksha and the Internet Charges can be met from this amount.

(b) For Schools in which ICT/ Smart Class rooms are not sanctioned under Samagra Shiksha and which have computing devices, Internet Charges can be met from the Management Monitoring Evaluation and Research (MMER) funds being released under Samagra Shiksha or can be met from any other State / UT Government funds.

The state governments have been advised to act based on the situation prevailing at every place to meet the demands of students and teachers for providing them with the digital access required for teaching learning digitally.

**Tinkering Labs:**

The Atal tinkering Laboratories (ATL) program is a key initiative of AIM, NITI Aayog to foster the spirit of creativity and innovation at school level. ATLs contain educational and learning 'do it yourself' kits and equipment on – science, electronics, robotics, open-source microcontroller boards, sensors and 3D printer and computers. As informed by NITI Aayog, 10,000 ATLs have been setup. In Samagra Shiksha, 5283 Tinkering Labs have been approved across 23 States/UTs. In PM SHRI, 5554 Tinkering Labs are sanctioned upto 4$^{th}$ Phase.