

Introduction

There are about 3.4 million children with disabilities between the ages of 5 and 14 years and above 8 lakh children with special needs between the ages of 0-4 years (Census 2001 as cited in a UNICEF document). Under Article 21-A of the Constitution and the RTE, the right to free and compulsory education is available to children between the ages of 6 and 14 only. However, the PWD Act extends this right until the age of 18 years. The RTE states that education of CWSN shall be as per the provisions of the PWD Act. There is the issue of classification of CWSN, the PWD Act places a benchmark that a person with disability means a person suffering from at least 40% of the listed disabilities. Children who do not fall under the definition of a 'person with disabilities' will have to be educated as per the RTE. The RTE mandates neither physical infrastructure (such as ramps, bars, braille, etc.) nor infrastructure in terms of teaching (special educators, special teaching and learning material, revised curricula and evaluations etc.) in mainstream schools for students with below 40% disability. The provisions under the PWD Act and Rules are not binding on mainstream schools which are not considered special schools. Home-based education is not allowed under the RTE.

Under SSA, efforts are made to give quality education to children with special needs. Some kind of liaison with parents of such children is extremely essential. Parent Councils were formed and regular meetings held on creating awareness on various disabilities. Parents were urged to hold a positive attitude and have faith in the abilities of disabled children. The Council has provided the platform to discuss family, social, education, rehabilitation issues and various psychological barriers related to disabilities.

Parents of disabled children have been nominated in SSA districts and all the members have undergone intensive training. In addition, Parents Councils have been formed in every village constituting of parents of disabled children. The members of Parent Council are trained on dealing with specific issues pertaining to children with various disabilities.

Generating Awareness

To mobilize the parents and teachers, posters (awareness material) for

Locomotor Disability, Visual Impairment (VI), Mental Retardation (MR) & Hearing Impairment (HI) are prepared and will be distributed in the schools. These posters carry messages on developing a positive attitude towards disabled children by parents, family members' etc. This awareness material will be used during Parent Council, MTA, PTA meetings.

Training Strategy

In cascade mode, training may be imparted to project staff at district, block and village levels. Class teachers dealing with disabled child is given specific training of the concerned disability at DRG level by qualified and experienced Resource Teachers. Class teachers of disabled children are oriented on classroom management, attitudinal aspects of teachers, classmates and schoolmates, curricular and co-curricular activities, supplementary literature, use of specific aids and appliances to address the problems of concerned disability of children. All other teachers of a school with a disabled child are trained on classroom management, attitudinal aspects of teachers, classmate and school mates and co-curricular and curricular activities.

Training Modules

Master Trainers' Training module may be developed and distributed to DRG & school levels. Teacher's training module that developed should be distributed in all the schools. The module guides the teachers in Classroom transaction and in changing their attitude towards the disabled children. In addition, the content of the module enables the teachers to design co-curricular activities, content-based teaching methods to suit the needs of children with various disabilities, use of literature in TLM (both standard and subject wise) and use of special aids.

Children with Special Need (CWSN)

State/UTs have been advised to initiate a special survey to identify the existing children of this category and the facilities received from the above scheme. State/UTs are also suggested to list out the facilities not received under the IEDSS and actually needed under RMSA to enhance the performance and learning level. State/UTs are directed to give the details of the facility needed and any other innovative activity separately required for this particular group as the group may

be separately focused rather than including with the general students. State/UTs are advised to include a separate plan under the district plan.

Approach & Options

The thrust of RMSA will be on providing integrated and inclusive education to all children with special needs in general schools. It will also support a wide range of approaches, options and strategies for education of children with special needs. This includes education through open learning system and open schools, non formal and alternative schooling, itinerant teacher model, remedial teaching, part time classes, community based rehabilitations (CBR) and vocational education and cooperative programmes.

Components: The following activities could form components of the programme:

a) **Early detection and identification:** A concerted drive to detect children with special needs should be undertaken through PHCs, ICDS and other school readiness programmes. Identification of children with special needs should become an integral part of the micro-planning and household surveys.

b) **Functional and formal assessment of each identified child should be carried out.** A team should be constituted at every district to carry out this assessment and recommend most appropriate placement for every child with special needs.

c) **Educational placement:** As far as possible, every child with special needs should be placed in regular schools, with needed support services.

d) **Aids and appliances:** All children requiring assistive devices should be provided with aids and appliances, obtained as far as possible through convergence with the ministry of social justice and empowerment, state welfare departments, national institution or NGOs.

e) **Support services:** Support services like physical access, resource rooms at school/district level, special equipment, reading material, special educational techniques, remedial teaching, curricular adaptation or adapted teaching strategies could be provided.

f) **Teacher training:** Intensive teacher training should be undertaken to sensitize regular teachers on effective classroom management of children with special needs. This training should be recurrent at district/DPO levels and integrated with the on-going in-service teacher training schedules in RMSA. All training modules at SCERT, DIET and district level should include a suitable component on education of children with special needs.

g) **Resource support:** Resource support could be given by teachers working in special schools. Where necessary specially trained resource teachers should be appointed, particularly for teaching special skills to children with special needs. Wherever this option is not feasible, long term training of regular teachers should be undertaken.

h) **Individualized Educational Plan (IEP):** An IEP should be prepared by the teacher for every child with special needs in consultation with parents and experts. Its implementation should be monitored from time to time. The programme should test the effectiveness of various strategies and models by measuring the learning achievement of children with special needs periodically, after developing indicators.

i) **Parental training and community mobilization:** Parents of children with disabilities should receive counseling and training on how to bring them up and teach them basic survival skills. Strong advocacy and awareness programme should form a part of strategy to educate every child with special needs. A component on disability should be included in all the modules for parents, SMDCs and community.

j) **Planning and management:** Resource groups should be constituted at state, district levels to undertake effective planning and management of the programmers in collaboration with PRIs and NGOs. An apex level resources group at the national level to provide guidance, technical and academic support to children with special needs under RMSA may be constituted.

k) **Strengthening of special schools:** Wherever necessary, special schools may be strengthened to obtain their resource support in convergence with departments and agencies working in that area.

l) **Removal of architectural barriers:** Architectural barriers in schools will be removed for easy access. Efforts will be taken to provide disable-friendly facilities in schools and educational institutions. Development of innovative designs for schools to provide an enabling environment for children with special needs should also be a part of the programme.

m) **Research:** RMSA will encourage research in all areas of education of children with special needs including research for designing and developing new assistive devices, teaching aids special teaching material and other items necessary to give a child with disability equal opportunities in education.

n) **Monitoring and evaluation:** On-going monitoring and evaluation should be carried out to refine the programme from time to time. For this, appropriate monitoring mechanisms should be devised at every level and field tested at regular intervals.

o) **Girls with disabilities:** Special emphasis must be given to education of girls with disabilities.

Following Interventions may be considered in regard to disabled children/differently able children:

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| Special survey for identification of differently able children |
| Strengthening of SRC for supporting CWSN enrolled of secondary stage (already established under SSA) |
| Setting up of redressal centre for learning disabilities. Following facilities will be provided <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Furniture and Fixtures● Psychologists● Special educator● 15 days teacher training (b)Assessment of children having learning disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Screening● Comprehensive (b) Remediation and Development of TLM |

(c) Preparation of manual for teachers on curriculum adaptations
