

Universalising Secondary Education in India: Seeking Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity in Planning Enhanced Access and Improved Quality¹

While India has achieved the EFA goal of universal primary education, too few children are transitioning to and succeeding in secondary school. The Government of India launched Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) to achieve universal secondary education however anecdotal evidence suggest that expansion policies under RMSA may have led to inequitable distribution of resources thus creating system that is highly cost inefficient and inequitable, without necessarily being of better quality. The key challenge therefore for the Government of India is to balance educational expansion goals with long-term sustainability, and perhaps most importantly, achieving equitable access to high quality secondary education.

This paper presents consolidated findings from a DFID-funded policy research project to gather evidence for more targeted funding under RMSA. Besides data from the secondary sources, the paper also use first round of data collected from the household and the school survey in three states: Assam, Bihar and Odisha, to present insight into how RMSA has been unfolding and identifies key issues for future development. The paper answers the following key questions: how has participation grown under RMSA, and what does this indicate about changing patterns of access, equity, efficiency and effectiveness and transitions into secondary education? How does schooling decision vary between levels? What efficiency gains are available from changes in the processes of planning for sustainability? The paper will make use of econometric methods which correct for selectivity and simultaneity biases.

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