



1. Project Data

Project ID P144447	Project Name IN: SSA III	
Country India	Practice Area(Lead) Education	
L/C/TF Number(s) IDA-54470,IDA-54480	Closing Date (Original) 30-Sep-2017	Total Project Cost (USD) 930,278,364.13
Bank Approval Date 16-May-2014	Closing Date (Actual) 28-Feb-2018	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	1,006,200,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	1,006,200,000.00	0.00
Actual	930,278,364.13	0.00

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, page 4) and the Financing Agreement (page 6), the project objective was as follows:

- To improve education outcomes of elementary school children in India.



The "education outcomes" were to be measured in terms of attendance, retention and transition rates, as well as adequate monitoring of learning levels. The results framework did not include indicators to track improvements in learning levels, as there was no robust measurement system in place at the time of project appraisal and therefore no meaningful baseline could be established; also, given the expected influx of out-of-school children into the school system as a result of project interventions, setting a target for improved learning levels was also not tenable.

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

(Note: Appraisal and actual amounts are for the Bank portion only).

1. Improving Quality and Enhancing Learning Outcomes (Appraisal: US\$549.0 million; Actual: US\$ 549.2 million): This component aimed to improve the quality of primary education, as measured by improved attendance, retention and transition rates. Activities included: development of specific grade-level learning standards and indicators; development of a school leadership program and a framework for assessment of school performance; and teacher training.

2. Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation for Improved Accountability (Appraisal: US\$ 166.0 million; Actual: US\$ 166.0 million): This component aimed to improve monitoring and evaluation systems in order to increase accountability for learning outcomes. Activities included: strengthening of the National Assessment System and school report cards; development of State Level Achievement Surveys; development of classroom assessment and teacher performance standards; capacity building for School Management Committees; and capacity building for Block Resource Centers and Cluster Resource Centers.

3. Enhancing Access and Retention for Disadvantaged Children (Appraisal: US\$ 291.0 million; Actual: US\$ 291.0 million): This component aimed to improve access for marginalized groups, including girls, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and Muslims. Activities included: mapping of habitations to identify unserved communities; provision of auxiliary infrastructure such as toilets; and provision of entitlements such as uniforms, textbooks, and aids for Children with Special Needs.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates



Project Cost

- The appraised project cost was US\$ 29,833.3 million. The actual project cost was US\$ 31,891.0 million.

Financing

- The project was financed by two International Development Association Credits totaling US\$ 1,006.2 million, of which US\$ 930.3 million disbursed. However, the actual amounts disbursed per component, according to the ICR (Annex 3), add up to US\$ 1,006.2 million.

Borrower Contribution

- The Borrower was expected to contribute US\$ 28,827.1 million, and the actual amount contributed was US\$ 30,960.7 million. The project was third in a series of Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) operations, of which this project comprised 3.37% of planned government spending on the sector.

Dates

- *August 2017*: The project closing date was extended from September 2017 to February 2018 as part of a no-cost extension. The government was in the process of requesting additional Bank support in the form of a new elementary education project; however, in an effort to maintain momentum on innovations put in place after the Mid-Term Review, an extension with no financial implications was undertaken as per mutual agreement to ensure that the Bank could continue providing the necessary technical assistance until an additional Bank operation was approved.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

India has made significant development gains over the past few decades, including increasing its share of global gross domestic product from 1.8% to 2.7%, lifting 53 million people out of poverty, doubling life expectancy from 31 years in 1947 to 65 years in 2012, and quadrupling the adult literacy rate from 18% in 1951 to 74% in 2011. However, challenges remain, including persisting poverty rates of 40% in certain states and inequalities vis-à-vis disadvantaged groups (females, Scheduled Caste and Schedule



Tribe). The government of India has adopted goals of universal access to elementary education (grades 1-8), particularly to improve attendance, retention, and learning outcomes, and has implemented legislation and national programs in strong support of such goals. However, in order to see improvements in these areas, the country must address issues related to low achievement scores on national assessments, drop outs in upper primary level, enrollment of children with special needs, and accountability systems for teachers and schools. The project objective directly supported such improvements and was strongly relevant to the government's education sector agenda, as encapsulated by the centrally sponsored scheme for universal elementary education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which has been in effect in multiple phases since 2001. The Bank's Country Partnership Framework for FY13-17 (at appraisal) identified improved access and quality of education as a key outcome, while the FY2018-22 Framework (at closing) also identified improving the quality of education in schools as a key focus area. Both CPFs, in the discussion of their education objectives refer to learning outcomes. For instance, the CPF 13-17 noted that "a final round of support to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program from the Bank and its development partners will help improve educational quality and student learning outcomes at the primary level" (page 38, paragraph 100). However, this project, according to the key project indicators, appears more focused on attendance, retention and transition, rather than on learning outcomes.

Rating

Substantial

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

Objective 1 Objective

To improve education outcomes for elementary school children in India.

Rationale

The project supported a SWAp in the primary education sector through financing of the government of India's centrally sponsored scheme for universal elementary education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). This included some financing for states' annual work programs and various activities at the national level. Bank financing represented approximately 3.4% of total program costs and was the third in a series of SWAps supported by the Bank, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID), and the European Union. Attribution to Bank support was unclear given the SWAp and the relatively small contribution of Bank funding.

The theory of change for the project was overall sound, with interventions focused on improving quality (early grade learning focus, teacher training, administrative capacity building, and introduction of school performance standards) and improving monitoring capacity to track education outcomes (attendance,



retention, and transition rates for this project; learning outcomes were expected to be tracked upon increased monitoring and assessment capacity) and target interventions accordingly. The project was expected to benefit all 200 million children enrolled in elementary schools and 4.5 million teachers, including specific interventions for vulnerable groups (girls, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Muslims, and Children with Special Needs).

Note: After project implementation had commenced, the government undertook a nationwide drive to assign a Unique Identity (UID) number to each student. Assigning a UID was the recommendation of SSA Joint Review Missions (JRMs) over the years, as this had a direct impact on the tracking of results against PDO indicators and various interim outcome indicators. Once the UID assignment was completed, enrollment records were cleaned up (accounting for students who had enrolled in multiple schools, dropped out, or were overage/underage for their age-appropriate class, as age-appropriate and grade-appropriate enrollment was strictly followed starting with the 2014-15 school year). This affected the validity of the project's baseline and original target figures, as there was no "back-cleaning" of enrollment data such that the baseline figures were still based on the old data. Therefore, the ICR provided figures based on error correction, in addition to the original figures (ICR, page 5). The error-corrected figures are reported below.

Outputs

- Introduction of early grade learning program and grade-specific learning standards for core subject areas in all 36 states (target: 36). (Note: The ICR (page 7) attributed improved transition rates to this intervention; however, given the project timeline such that the beneficiaries of the early grade learning program would not have reached upper primary level by project closing, these outcomes are not attributable to this project.)
- Provision of teacher training, including in Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation of students for more timely identification of academically struggling students. According to the project team, the number of trained teachers increased from a baseline of about 2.1 million to more than 4.1 million at project closing.
- Introduction of State Level Learning Assessments in 27 states (target: 20), which provide feedback to teachers to enable them to identify weaker students and take remedial action.
- Provision of leadership training for school administrators. According to the project team, 261,100 headmasters received training.
- Provision of training for School Management Committees to increase community engagement and thus contribute to improved student attendance and retention.
- Development of school report cards to enable monitoring of school performance particularly in terms of adequacy of infrastructure and human resources. There was no information provided in the ICR on the increased number of schools that were utilizing report cards, but the project team reported that 49.2% of schools were utilizing them.



- Establishment of Block Resource Centers and Cluster Resource Centers to support teachers to improve classroom teaching and learning. 99% of staff positions were filled at these Resource Centers (target: 70%). According to the project team, 53,188 such Centers received training in academic support.
- Expansion of habitation coverage of public elementary schools, including building of separate toilet facilities for girls. No specific figures were reported in the ICR.
- Provision of free uniforms and textbooks to marginalized groups. No specific figures were reported in the ICR.
- Provision of special services for Children with Special Needs, including resource teachers for academic support, free aids and appliances, and home-based education. No specific figures were reported in the ICR.

Outcomes

Overall outcomes

- The number of states/territories at the lower primary level that recorded attendance rates of more than 80% (on the day the National Achievement Survey was conducted in 2017) increased from 12 to 23, surpassing the target of 20. The number of states/territories at the upper primary level that recorded attendance rates of more than 80% also increased from 15 to 25, achieving the target of 25.
- The retention rate at the primary level (grade 5 enrollment, adjusted for repeaters, compared to grade 1 enrollment four years prior) increased from 82.8% in 2012 to 88.8% in 2016, plausibly due to remedial support and outreach to marginalized groups. The original target was not applicable due to the data-cleaning exercise.
- The transition rate from primary level to upper primary level (grade 6 enrollment compared to previous year's grade 5 enrollment) increased from 86.2% in 2012 to 90.4% in 2016, plausibly due to remedial support and outreach to marginalized groups. The original target was not applicable due to the data-cleaning exercise.
- Enrollment at the upper primary level increased from 64.9 million in 2012 to 66.1 million in 2016. The original target was not applicable, due to the data cleaning exercise. This outcome is plausibly attributed to the improved retention and transition rates for upper primary, reported above.

Intermediate outcome: Improved quality

- 88% of government school teachers received in-service training, achieving the target of 40%. The percentage of teachers with qualifications mandated by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act improved from 83.4% in 2011-12 to 87.9% in 2015-16.
- Teacher attendance increased from a baseline of 81.7% in 2012 to 85.6% at the primary level and 84.9% at the upper primary level. These fell short of the target of 90%.



- 76% of school headmasters and 63% of educational administrators from State to Block level received training (cumulatively since 2012-13), achieving the targets of 50% and 25%, respectively.
- The pupil:teacher ratio at the elementary level improved from 27:1 to 23:1 by project closing. (There was no target identified, as this was not an original project indicator).

Intermediate outcome: Improved monitoring and evaluation

- A national system for learning assessment at the primary level was established. The National Achievement Survey for 2017 was completed in less than a year, compared to a turnaround time of three years for prior assessments, and was able to report on whether learning levels nationally and at the state level were improving, declining, or staying the same, in specific core subject areas.
- 100% of states/territories had access to an online portal for reporting performance, according to national school performance standards developed by the central government. 94.2% of School Management Committees were playing a role in school supervision, as verified by sample checks of school development plans and meeting registers.
- 31 states/territories were utilizing at least 80% of grant funds, surpassing the target of 12.

Intermediate outcome: Improved equitable access and retention

- The share of schools with separate toilet facilities for girls increased from 72% in 2012 to 97.8% in 2016, surpassing the target of 74%.
- The share of girls, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Muslim children enrolled in elementary level in the 2016-17 school year was comparable to their representative share in the total population: girls - 48.3% share of enrollment vs. 48.0% share of population; Scheduled Caste - 16.6% share of enrollment vs. 19.5% share of population; Scheduled Tribe - 8.6% share of enrollment vs. 10.3% share of population; Muslims - 13.4% share of enrollment vs. 13.8% share of population.
- The proportion of Children with Special Needs enrolled in school and education programs increased from 77% in 2012 to 95.8% in 2016. There was no target provided.
- According to additional data disaggregated for low-income states provided by the project team, improvements in attendance, retention, and transition rates were realized in parallel in those disadvantaged states.

The ICR (page 5) noted that the improvement in student attendance rate occurred in tandem with improvements in the gross enrollment rate at both the primary level (stabilization from 98% to 95%) and the upper primary level (increase from 85% to 91%). However, as the PAD (page 1) highlighted inequalities in education outcomes across different states, particularly in "low-income and challenged states," there is no information reported on in the ICR on whether the gains achieved above were realized in these disadvantaged states, although the project team subsequently provided data to verify that achievements



included gains in low-income states. Also, although the project design did not intend to track learning outcomes due to the initial lack of capacity to monitor and assess learning, the ICR referred to national and state assessments (for example, page 8) that were able to report on learning levels; reporting these data in the ICR would have further strengthened the evidence of project impact.

Rating
Substantial

Rationale

Achievement of the objective to improve education outcomes for elementary school children is rated Substantial due to evidence of increased attendance, retention and transition rates. However, achievement against target figures could not be verified due to the data cleaning exercise. There was also evidence of improved quality of teaching, monitoring and evaluation, and equitable access. Attribution of the achievements observed to Bank financing is not clear, as the Bank's financial contribution comprised approximately 3.4% of total program costs.

Overall Efficacy Rating
Substantial

5. Efficiency

The PAD (Annex 6) presented an economic analysis of the project using estimated costs and benefits. Estimated benefits were derived from the increased number of students completing primary and upper primary education (normalizing to 100% completion rate) and increased wage differentials due to the completion. Costs were the per-pupil cost of education in India, including private costs. The net present value of the program was estimated at US\$ 12.4 billion, and the internal rate of return was estimated at 17.7%. However, it should be noted that the analysis covered the entire SWAp, not just the Bank financed portion.

The updated economic analysis, as presented in the ICR (Annex 4), calculated an estimated internal rate of return of 19.2%, using the same benefit and cost assumptions. The ICR suggested that this rate was higher than the PAD estimate because income returns on the completion of primary and upper primary education improved significantly over the project period. In addition, the ICR analysis used separate income estimates for men vs. women (rather than the aggregate estimate used at appraisal) due to the wage gap and higher labor force participation of men.



In addition, the following implementation experiences point to efficiency in the use of project resources: The project funds disbursed fully before the original project closing date; funds allocated to state budgets were utilized more fully (the number of states/territories that used at least 80% of funds increased from only 3 states at project start to 31 states by project closing); some small schools were consolidated thereby rationalizing the use of teachers and infrastructure (21,000 schools were consolidated over the last three years of the project period); in-service teacher training was reduced from 20 to 10 days, due to a shift from standardized to needs-based training, which led to reduced per-teacher training costs (however, no specific data were reported on the reduced costs); development partner activities were well coordinated; and the project leveraged the government's data cleaning exercise (UIDs) to improve implementation of this project. There were some shortcomings in fiduciary performance that may have diminished efficiency (see Section 10b).

Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal	✓	17.70	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	19.20	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

Relevance of the project objective is rated Substantial due to alignment with country conditions and sector program. Achievement of the objective to improve education outcomes for elementary school children is rated Substantial due to evidence of increased attendance, retention and transition rates, as well as evidence of intermediate outcomes including improved quality of teaching, monitoring and evaluation, and equitable access. Efficiency is rated Substantial due to a estimated EIRR of 19.2% (compared to 17.7% at appraisal) and other implementation experience that points to efficiency in the use of project resources, such as full disbursement at the original closing date, more states using at least 80% of funds, and consolidation of small schools. The outcome of the project is overall Satisfactory, reflecting only minor shortcomings in the project's preparation and implementation.



a. Outcome Rating
Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

Policy and institutional support for improving the quality of elementary education has been well established. Government expenditures are being increasingly channeled to quality investments, as reflected by the organization of state-level financial allocations into three categories, one of which is for interventions focused on education quality. Monitoring and educational data systems have also improved in functionality, which will contribute to more accurate student data and subsequent programmatic and budget decisions. However, state level capacity remains uneven.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project was the third in a series of SWAp operations in the elementary education sector in India; therefore, implementation arrangements built upon existing structures. Lessons learned from these prior operations were also incorporated into the project design, including focusing on teacher performance, utilizing financing as a tool to improve quality, producing data to assess learning outcomes, and demonstrating results to ensure political commitment. Key project interventions focused on monitoring and evaluation (including a strong framework for project monitoring) not just for the national system, but at the district/school level such that immediate remedial action could be taken due to more timely identification of academically weaker students. Partnerships with other donors were effectively utilized to add technical expertise; the ICR (page 13) cited the example of DFID providing technical assistance in educational assessments to improve technical quality. Overall project risk was assessed as Substantial, due to capacity and governance issues; mitigation measures were effectively identified, including significant capacity building in fiduciary management.

Quality-at-Entry Rating
Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

Project supervision featured the continued participation of other donors, including through JRMs, which helped to enhance project supervision; jointly-delivered recommendations were taken onboard by the government, including for critical large-scale reforms such as the provision of untied funds for quality reforms and introduction of the performance assessment systems at the state level. The ICR (page 19)



noted that the JRMs' focus on "actionable and time-bound recommendations" was an important factor in helping the government to undertake these reforms in a short time frame. Overall, the supervision period was marked by a sustained focus on improving data quality and using M&E data for decision-making.

There were some minor shortcomings in fiduciary performance, including inadequate internal controls and staffing constraints, although there were no major fiduciary problems or negative impact on project performance reported.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The results framework and M&E arrangements were overall strong. Indicators captured overall outcomes in attendance, retention, and transition rates, as well as intermediate outcomes in quality and equity. As noted in the ICR, the results framework did not include indicators to track improvements in learning levels, as there was no robust measurement system in place at the time of project appraisal and therefore no meaningful baseline could be established; also, given the expected influx of out-of-school children into the school system as a result of project interventions, setting a target for improved learning levels was also not tenable. The M&E arrangements relied on existing monitoring systems that had been used effectively in previous operations, including collecting a common set of data through the annual work program process. Monitoring arrangements also included contracting 41 Monitoring Institutions (research organizations and universities) to carry out independent reviews of implementation at the school level (visits to a random sample of schools in a given state once per quarter). SWAp indicators were highly relevant but were program-wide, and therefore created some difficulties in capturing project-specific achievements.

b. M&E Implementation

Monitoring of project progress was regularly carried out, with data collected from identified sources as planned and frequently triangulated with data from external sources. JRMs with participation from multiple donors and the government were conducted once or twice per year and included field missions to six states. The ICR (page 15) noted the following: while all JRMs initially incorporated field missions to states, it became clear that this was unnecessarily burdensome to the states and the Ministry, and so field visits were subsequently arranged for only one JRM per year. However, this change enabled more in-depth engagement



with national agencies and the datasets/reports being produced for the project, and also reduced the reporting burden on states.

c. M&E Utilization

The ICR (page 15-16) reported that M&E had a "substantial influence" on the project and led to various operational and policy changes. Examples cited included: the importance of cleaning data records using UIDs for students; creation of the online educational data portal, which was an effective tool for program monitoring and assessment of quantitative data; a recommended reduction in the duration of in-service training for teachers through a shift to customized, needs-based training, which enabled the provision of training to a significantly greater percentage of teachers than anticipated; and alerting the central Ministry to inefficiencies caused by the oversupply of school infrastructure, which led to the merging of several thousand schools.

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was classified as an Environmental Category "B" project. The safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4/10) was triggered given the targeted activities among marginalized groups.

The ICR (page 18) cited some examples of project efforts to promote "green and clean" schools, including: (a) integration of basic environment, health, and safety elements in the Program's Planning and Appraisal Manual; (b) nation-wide campaign on Clean Schools; (c) provision of ramps, railings, and toilets for the physically challenged and initiatives for Children with Special Needs; and (d) monitoring the status and condition of physical infrastructure elements. However, there is no explicit statement of compliance with environmental management guidelines.

The PAD (page 18-19) referenced an Indigenous Peoples Plan that built upon the prior plans from the first two SWAp operations in the series. The ICR (page 17) reported on the social assessment that suggested actions for improving equity among disadvantaged groups, but stated incorrectly that "the OP 4.10 on Indigenous Peoples was not triggered." There was no information in the ICR to verify compliance with this safeguard.



b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial management: The financial management arrangements built upon existing arrangements from prior operations while including additional measures to further strengthen capacity, such as: (i) application of a uniform approach to fiduciary management through use of a comprehensive manual on these topics to all states; (ii) launch of the online portal to provide a transparent mechanism for continuous financial monitoring; and (iii) quarterly review meetings of states’ Finance Controllers, overseen by the central Ministry. The ICR (page 14) noted that stronger internal control systems than originally anticipated were required under the project, especially for internal audit processes and maintenance of Utilization Certificates. Financial management staffing constraints, both in terms of vacant posts and staff capacity limitations, were also continuously flagged by the Bank in supervision reports.

Procurement: Given the SWAp nature of the operation, the project received a waiver (obtained through the Managing Director) that the legal documents for Bank financing would not require application of Bank procurement guidelines. Instead, the procurement procedures adhered to the central government norms and procurement provisions in the project’s Financing Agreement and Financial Management and Procurement Manual. However, some weaknesses remained, as noted in a post-procurement review conducted in seven states. These included the splitting of requirements, not using the desired method as per the procurement threshold, and delays in payment. The ICR noted that these issues appeared to be due to a "lack of awareness about procurement guidelines on the part of the officials handling procurement."

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None reported.

d. Other

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	---
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	---
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial	---
Quality of ICR		Substantial	---



12. Lessons

Lessons drawn from the ICR and adapted by IEG:

- The Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) can be an effective instrument for early sector reform efforts, given the convergence with national government programs and the broad-based reach of the reforms; however, a more results-based approach can come into play once the early reforms have been achieved and more targeted, specific initiatives are needed. In the case of this project, the SWAp helped to bring about increased access through widespread teacher training and early childhood initiatives. However, improving quality required a more state-by-state approach in order to address specific challenges in each state, which the project began to support through state-level performance assessments and the use of state annual work program processes.
- The development of grade-level, subject-specific learning standards, which are then directly linked to student assessments and remedial actions by teachers, can have an immediate impact on education outcomes. In the case of this project, results from grade-level assessments alongside teacher training (including in evaluation of student performance) contributed to improved retention and transition rates.

13. Assessment Recommended?

Yes

Please explain

To verify impact from the series of three SWAp operations in the elementary education sector.

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR quality was substantial, with an evidence-based assessment of performance. It was concise and adhered to ICR guidelines. There was a substantial amount of quantitative evidence in the ICR to support overall outcomes; although, due to the SWAp approach, the data reporting relied heavily on program-wide indicators and thus made it challenging to verify project-specific impact. As mentioned in Section 4, although the project design did not intend to track learning outcomes due to the initial lack of capacity to monitor and assess learning, the ICR referred to national and state assessments that were able to report on learning levels;



reporting these data in the ICR would have further strengthened the evidence of project impact. Also, for Component 3, there were no specific data on outputs for marginalized groups (i.e. habitation coverage, number of children from marginalized groups receiving free uniforms and supplies, number of children with special needs receiving services) to verify project impact. Given the amount of financing/proportion of project costs that comprised Component 3 activities, actual figures would have strengthened the results chain and attribution of outcomes to the project. Annex 1B (Key Outputs) should have contained a report of actual outputs, not the planned outputs. There was insufficient information to verify environmental and social safeguards compliance.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial