

Supplementary lib-lab-lav budget

Arguably the most glaring deficiency of the elementary (primary plus upper primary) education system shaped by post-independence India's education establishment, is that most government schools lack the barest minimum infrastructure and facilities. This hits enrolment and prompts student dropouts and teacher truancy on a massive scale.

To squarely address the issue of infrastructure inadequacy of government elementaries, following presentation of the Union Budget 2008-09, together with Dr. A.S. Seetharamu (hitherto professor of education at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore), *EducationWorld* presented a supplementary budget to equip every elementary school countrywide with a library, laboratory and lavatories. Though subsequently after the enactment of the Right to Education Act, 2009, increased financial flows have funded some infrastructure improvement of government elementaries in India, the basic needs gap is still wide.

According to Dr. Seetharamu, of India's 1,303,812 (1.30 million) elementary schools (2010-11), 254,178 are private unaided schools which are generally well-equipped. Prof. Seetharamu's updated calculus of provisioning government elementaries with lab-lib-lav facilities is presented below.

Elementaries in need (million)

	No. of govt. elementary schools	No. of govt. schools with facility	No. of schools needing facility
Common toilets	1.0	0.64	0.36
Girls' toilets	1.0	0.74	0.25
Library	1.0	0.50	0.50
Laboratory	1.0	0.25	0.75
Reading room (small schools)	0.27	Assumed nil	0.27

Lab-lib-lav funding calculus

	Facility	Unit price (Rs.)	No. of schools in need (000)	No. of units (000)	Expenditure (Rs. crore)
(i)	Common toilets	35,000	360	500	1,750
(ii)	Girls' toilets	35,000	250	500	1,750
(iii)	Water connection for (i) & (ii) above	10,000	410	1,000	1,000
(iv)	Library facility (including additions)				
	a. Small libraries	100,000	350	350	3,500
	b. Reading corners for small schools	25,000	300	300	750
(v)	Laboratory facility (including additions)	200,000	500	500	10,000
(vi)	Large building for — library, laboratory & other children- friendly facilities	250,000	750	750	18,750
(vii)	Miscellaneous — furniture for laboratory, library, reading corner	35,000	1,050	1,050	3,675
(viii)	Recurring maintenance expenditure for lab-lib-lav (annual)	15,000	1,050	1,050	1,575
(ix)	Total lab-lib-lav expenditure for government primaries and upper primaries				42,750

Although prima facie the sum of Rs.42,750 crore required to equip every government primary and upper primary countrywide with a library, laboratory and lavatories seems large, it aggregates to less than 0.5 percent of GDP, projected at Rs.9589,503 crore in 2012-13.

While presenting the Union Budget 2012-13, finance minister Pranab Mukherjee had numerous options to raise

resources, cut wasteful government expenditure and redeploy savings into building a sustainable infrastructure for elementary education. But predictably, he missed the opportunity. Therefore for the unfortunate estimated 131 million children in 1.25 million government primaries and upper primaries, it's education as usual in ramshackle schools lacking the most basic facilities.