

Supplementary Budget for Elementary Education

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.

To squarely address the issue of infrastructure inadequacy of government elementaries, last year following the 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. In our opinion this is a necessary pre-condition of transforming India's ramshackle primary and upper primaries into attractive schools able to retain students in education.

According to Dr. Seetharamu, of India's 1,250,775 (1.25 million) elementary schools, 243,895 are private unaided

institutions which are generally well-equipped. Prof. Seetharamu's 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	0.58	0.42
Girls toilets	1.0	0.42	0.58
Library	0.75	Assumed nil	0.75
Laboratory	0.75	Assumed nil	0.75
Reading room (small schools)	0.30	Assumed nil	0.30

Lab-lib-lav provisioning calculus

	Facility	Unit price (Rs.)	No. of schools in need (000)	No. of units (000)	Expenditure (Rs. crore)
(i)	Common toilets	30,000	423	650	1,950
(ii)	Girls' toilets	30,000	589	1,000	3,000
(iii)	Water connection for (i) & (ii) above	10,000	1,006	1,006	1,006
(iv)	Library facility (including additions)				
	a. Small libraries	100,000	753	753	7,535
	b. Reading corners for small schools	25,000	300	300	750
(v)	Laboratory facility (including additions)	200,000	753	753	15,070
(vi)	Large building for — library, laboratory & other children-friendly facilities	250,000	753	753	18,825
(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				53,386

Although *prima facie* the sum of Rs.53,386 crore required to equip every government primary and upper primary countrywide with a library, laboratory and lavatories seems large, it aggregates to only 1 percent of GDP (Rs.5321,753 crore in 2008-09).

While presenting the Union budget 2009-10 on July 6,

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 (see box 'India's hidden wealth' p.41). But expectedly, he muffed the chance. In the Union finance ministry, it's business as usual.

Source: NUEPA and HRD ministry data — processed by Dr. A.S. Seetharamu