

# Mainstreaming Gender through Sector Wide Approaches in Education

## INDIA CASE STUDY

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A study carried out for DFID

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## Acronyms

<b>AS</b>	Alternative Schooling
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DEO</b>	District Education Office(r)
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>DIET</b>	District Institute of Education Training
<b>DPEP</b>	District Primary Education Programme
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>EdCIL</b>	Education Consultants India Ltd
<b>GoI</b>	Government of India
<b>ISM</b>	Internal Supervision Mission
<b>JRM</b>	Joint Review Mission
<b>MS</b>	Mahila Samakhya
<b>NFE</b>	Non Formal Education
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>PROBE</b>	Public Report on Basic Education
<b>SC</b>	Scheduled Caste
<b>SCERT</b>	State Councils of Educational Research and Training
<b>ST</b>	Scheduled Tribe
<b>SWAP</b>	Sector Wide Approach
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UPE</b>	Universal Primary Education
<b>VEC</b>	Village Education Committee

## Executive Summary

This case study of Mainstreaming Gender in an Education Sector Programme in India – the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) – is one of three country studies included in a study initiated by the Working Party on Gender Equality (WP-GEN) of the Development Committee of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. The other country programmes included in the study are Ghana and Uganda. Similar studies in the agriculture and health sectors are being undertaken separately with funding support from WP-GEN members. The education study has been funded by DFID.

The objectives of the study were to assess the extent to which gender equality and gender specific goals have been identified in DPEP; to identify the concepts, approaches and tools used to incorporate gender analysis and objectives in to its design and implementation; to analyse the effectiveness of the approaches taken to mainstream gender concerns; and to identify lessons from experience and good practice, and propose means by which gender mainstreaming in education SWAPs could be strengthened in future work. Together with information gathered from the other two countries, the intention is to identify and disseminate lessons in the form of a synthesis report.

An introductory section to this report outlines study objectives in greater detail and provides a brief description of DPEP. DPEP is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Government of India, supported by international donors. Launched in November 1994, DPEP is presently being implemented in 193 Districts of India across 15 states. The programme continues to expand. DPEP stated objectives are to increase access, reduce dropout, increase equity, raise achievement levels and strengthen institutional capacity. DPEP's approach has been to provide the opportunity to individual districts to develop their own educational plans within certain key parameters. A key dimension to DPEP, therefore, relates to a decentralisation process. Capacity building is focussed on this aspect in particular.

Of especial interest to this study has been the third DPEP objective listed above, to do with equity. Specifically, DPEP is seeking to reduce differences in enrolment, dropout rates and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than five percent.

Following an introduction dealing with the background, context and report structure outlined above, the main body of the report comprises the following sections: key observations on the SWAp context; the extent to which gender is articulated as a goal; tools, concepts, and approaches used to mainstream gender at the sector level; effectiveness of the approaches used to date; lessons and recommendations. The main content of each of these sections is summarised below.

### Key Observations on the SWAp Context

The report considers two key dimensions of the SWAp context: firstly, the socio-cultural, political and educational context in which DPEP resides in India as a whole; secondly, the extent to which DPEP exhibits the characteristics of a SWAp.

The report points up the difficulties of making meaningful generalisations in a country as large as diverse as India. Indeed, one of the key characteristics of context is the wide variation to be found in respect of almost every criterion, such as between and among regions or between and among social groups.

The Indian context in gender terms is explored with reference to the complex interaction with poverty, caste, ethnicity and other cross-cutting issues. The political and institutional context, decentralisation, government and social issues, government culture, government and donor relations, civil society, and the role that perceptions play in shaping reality are also considered. One third of the world's total number of absolute poor reside in India. The concept of being 'capability poor', in addition to being simply economically poor,

has especial relevance. A key point that emerges from consideration of different ways of analysing poverty is that, in each, case girls and women tend to be among the most vulnerable or disadvantaged.

The report also focuses on the educational context in particular, highlighting how the system is characterised by low achievements, high disparities, and slow progress. Important examples of the institutional and constitutional frameworks that both enable and constrain progress are also considered.

An assessment of the extent to which DPEP, as a specific country programme, exhibits the characteristics of a SWAp (as defined in the study inception report) is attempted in the form of a matrix analysis. It is concluded that DPEP does indeed bear many of the characteristics of a SWAp. However, it is important to stress that DPEP is not a self-consciously defined SWAp, and is not recognised as such by donors or government. DPEP covers 225 Districts – and reaches approximately 40% of the relevant population.

DPEP is found to be appropriately linked to the contextual elements described and to take them into account to a very substantial degree. Indeed, essentially, DPEP was conceived as a response to prevailing contextual factors. Nonetheless, while great efforts are being made to address gender issues, because the constraints are so great, India still faces enormous challenges in translating policy level commitments into real improvements in the lives of poor men and women.

## **The Extent to which Gender is Articulated as a Goal**

In particular, the report looks closely at the “DPEP Guidelines” a key handbook/reference book for all involved in DPEP: a document that, more than any other, provides a succinct summary of the essence of DPEP, including its objectives, parameters, and appropriate patterns of appraisal, implementation, management and monitoring. This section of the report also includes a matrix analysis showing the main DPEP programme components and the extent to which gender is presently articulated within them.

Overall, there is a focus on girls’ education, and a paragraph which recognises the importance of a gender perspective at all levels of planning and implementation. However, in practice, the main operational focus is on increasing girls’ enrolment; the mainstreaming focus tends to slip from the agenda. It may be that this is the only feasible practical response, given the very low baseline, in gender terms, from which the programme begins. While girls’ education is well embedded as an operational focus at the policy level, therefore, the wider mainstreaming agenda is not to the same degree. The report examines the explanations of, justifications for, and limitations of this.

The concept of dynamic understanding of, and approaches to, gender mainstreaming is introduced. The essential arguments being that our understanding of the best ways to approach gender equity and gender mainstreaming is not static; moreover, as capacity is built and increased development understanding is generated and disseminated, it may be desirable that any balance between approaches of gender targeting and gender mainstreaming should shift. It is suggested that this is a particular challenge for DPEP and the time may now be ripe for a reappraisal.

## **Tools, Concepts and Approaches used to Mainstream Gender at Sector Level**

For ease of discussion the report categorises and examines concepts, tools and approaches used to mainstream gender at sector level under the following sub-heads: analytical, financial, management, data and research, process and implementation, policy and planning, resources and infrastructure, and linkages. Each is examined in turn. An important consideration that re-emerges is the interplay between gender mainstreaming and gender targeting. A crucial pattern focussed upon, including its implications and a response strategy, is the weakening and ‘de-prioritisation’ of gender, the further the programme moves away from the centre: in other words from the centre to the state, and the state to the district, from policy to

practice. Much of this has to do with a correlation between the degree of capacity found at these respective levels.

In extrapolating from the specific context of DPEP to the general nature of SWApS a number of important points emerge. Much of the potential of SWApS to be responsive to local needs would seem to depend on their ability to recognise, link and work with quality local structures. Policy commitment must link with needs expressed from the grass roots. External (i.e, donor) and internal (especially “grass roots”) perspectives on gender may be different. The Centre has a crucial role as an interface; moreover, it is well placed to perform such a function.

With regard to finance specifically, gender disaggregated budgeting and expenditure monitoring is a manifest ideal to strive for. It is suggested there is considerable scope for DPEP to respond further to this particular challenge at an early opportunity. However, the report also discusses some of the dangers and limitations of making programmes too finance driven, particularly in respect of gender. It is concluded that when SWAp and project modalities are compared, gender disaggregated budgeting and monitoring might initially seem no less feasible in either. However, when it is recognised that the collection of gender disaggregated data is in large part dependent on the design and output of management information systems for the sector as a whole, and when, as DPEP shows, central commitment needs to be supported by capacity building at the local level, SWApS would appear to have significantly more scope to approach this holistically and coherently, as well as leverage for change.

## **Effectiveness of Approaches Used to Date**

The penultimate section of the report aims to do two things: consider the effectiveness of approaches to gender mainstreaming in terms of DPEP’s own objectives and to begin the process of drawing lessons from the DPEP experience in terms of moving toward a gender mainstreamed SWAp, including in a wider international context.

In terms of its own objectives, DPEP is being successful in a number of key areas, especially helping to initiate a process of change. DPEP is contributing, for example, in a major way, to strengthening and developing decentralised institutional frameworks in support of educational reform. Especially significant is the “critical mass” of DPEP. Its geographical coverage now extends to approximately 40 per cent of the country in 225 Districts. Thus, DPEP is exerting forces for change well beyond those achievable in project mode.

There is already empirical evidence emerging to confirm the extent to which DPEP has begun to achieve the extensive mobilisation of local communities for education. It has increased enrolment, especially of girls. A study of the first four states to implement DPEP reports an incremental increase in enrolment, over and above the increase in non-DPEP districts, in the range of 4 to 17 per cent. Of especial significance, girls account for 51.5 per cent of the increase. However, enrolment figures are rather limited as indicators: information on learning achievement, retention and attendance rates is presently less robust and it is too early to draw conclusions with confidence, especially in relation to any reduction in gender disparities.

DPEP experience highlights the importance of context: what might work well as a gender strategy in one district may not be appropriate or so successful in another. This caveat notwithstanding, there are a number of innovative DPEP approaches of potential wider international interest. The report highlights the potential of the international world wide web to disseminate learning experiences of this kind.

## **Lessons and Recommendations**

The overriding context for drawing lessons and recommendations from an examination of the DPEP experience relates to the challenge of helping to increase understanding of the implications of a development

cooperation paradigm shift: one where projects are replaced by sector wide approaches. An attempt has thus been made to focus on those lessons that are constructive, practical, and potentially “enabling”, and to point to where SWAPs appear to offer greater scope or opportunity for gender mainstreaming in education.

Key points are simply listed here. In the main body of the report all of these points are elaborated upon.

- SWAPs can enable policy changes unlikely to have been achievable in project mode
- Vigilance is required to ensure that operational and policy frameworks are gender sensitive.
- SWAPs need not be centralising
- Clear gender commitments in programme objectives should be followed up with commitments to monitor, to ensure they are operationalised
- In most SWAPs there is likely to be a continued justification for targeted gender interventions to ‘level the playing field’
- The relationship between gender mainstreaming and targeting is dynamic; strategic targeting doesn’t necessarily preclude a wider mainstreaming framework.
- The concept of mainstreaming is itself problematic, in that it implies the existence of one ‘main’ stream, rather than the possibility of several, equally valid streams.
- Gender issues remain that lie beyond the focus of a SWAP. These need to be taken into account.
- A challenge for SWAPs is to ensure that there is continuity in policy making, by ensuring systems for institutional learning on gender issues and incorporating learning on gender mainstreaming from earlier programmes.
- A gender mainstreamed SWAP requires vigilance from donors and governments to focus and monitor progress towards gender mainstreaming within their *own* institutions.
- Vigilance is required to avoid policy evaporation (gender ‘fadeaway’) from rhetoric to action, over time, and in moving outwards from the centre.
- Dissemination activities have a crucial public relations and educational role to play. Due emphasis should be given to them.
- SWAPs have especial potential to honour and respond to changing international and national rights perspectives and other legal frameworks as relating to gender.
- A wider SWAP challenge is to ensure that attempts to mainstream gender are accompanied by mainstreaming of gender disaggregated budgetary commitments and that their utilisation is monitored.
- For future SWAPs it may well be desirable or necessary to build in safeguards/mechanisms that create the enabling conditions for non governmental organisations to achieve their full potential in contribution to the realisation of SWAP objectives, especially, for example, in respect of alternative schooling.

## 1: INTRODUCTION

This introductory section serves three main purposes. Firstly, it briefly sets out the objectives of the wider study, of which this case study forms a part. Secondly, it provides a summary description of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) - the India case study initiative that is examined in this document. Thirdly, report structure is explained.

### Study Objectives

The broader study, of which this case study is a component, has the following objectives:

- to assess the extent to which gender equality and gender specific goals have been identified as objectives in education Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) in three developing countries;
- to identify the concepts, approaches and tools used to incorporate gender analysis and objectives into the design and implementation of the selected SWAs;
- to analyse the effectiveness of the approaches taken to mainstreaming gender concerns;
- to identify lessons from experience and good practice, and propose means by which gender mainstreaming in education SWAs could be strengthened in future work;
- to explore the extent to which contextual factors such as institutional frameworks and stakeholder groups may influence the incorporation of gender into Education SWAs.

The three case study countries chosen comprise Ghana, India, and Uganda. This document constitutes the India case study report. The programme that is examined, in India, is the District Primary Education Programme: DPEP.

### DPEP: A Brief Description

The main purpose of this subsection is limited to providing the reader for whom DPEP is unfamiliar with sufficient summary background knowledge and understanding of the programme for the rest of what follows to be meaningful. DPEP is such a complex programme that it is beyond the scope of this report to elaborate upon all its aspects in detail. For the reader who is interested in learning more about DPEP, **Annex 1** details additional suggested reading<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Policy*

The Government of India's National Policy of Education (as updated in 1992) and the Programme of Action, 1992, reaffirmed the commitment of Government to Universalisation of Elementary Education. DPEP, a centrally sponsored scheme, was conceived as a practical programme response.

#### *Objectives*

The explicit objectives of DPEP are to:

- provide all children with access to primary education (Class I to V);
- reduce primary dropout rates for all students to less than 10 percent;
- reduce differences in enrolment, dropout rates, and learning achievement among gender and social groups to less than 5 per cent;
- raise the average achievement levels of students by at least 25 percent in language and mathematics and at least 40 percent achievement levels in other subjects;

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<sup>1</sup> A readily accessible source of information is the excellent Government of India, Department of Education web site: <http://www.education.nic.in/>

- strengthen the capacity of national, state and district institutions and organisations for planning, management and evaluation of primary education.

### Concept

Associated with DPEP are a number of guiding principles or non-explicit objectives<sup>2</sup>. A large part of what DPEP is about is promoting the process of **decentralisation**: from the Centre to the State, and from the State to the District. DPEP is based upon individual districts themselves developing their own education plans, within certain key parameters.

Furthermore, DPEP is promoting innovation, stressing the importance of “**contextuality**” (i.e. recognising that different local conditions and problems may require different educational solutions). DPEP actively encourages “**convergence**” (collaboration and coordination) with initiatives, institutions, and organisations outside of the government education sector, but which impact directly or indirectly on the education milieu. Of especial significance for this study, is the extent to which DPEP has been able to work with women’s groups at the “grass roots” level and Government and other bodies dealing with gender issues.

### Organisation and Management Structure

DPEP’s management structure has a number of different levels: national, state, district, block, cluster and village.

- At the *national* level, the **Mission General Council (GC)** headed by the Minister of Human resource development provides policy direction to the **Project Board**, headed by the Education Secretary. The project board is the executive body with full financial and administrative powers to implement the programme. The **DPEP Bureau** is a cell within the Ministry dedicated to implementing the programme. It is responsible for background policy work, release of funds to the states, appraisal, supervision, monitoring, research and evaluation, reimbursement, procurement and technical support. Professional and technical support is provided by **Education Consultants India Ltd (EdCIL)**, while a range of national resource centres (e.g. National Council of Educational Research and Training, NCERT) provide additional support.
- At the *state* level, the programme is implemented by a registered autonomous society. The **General Council**, headed by the Chief Minister, provides policy direction; the **Executive committee**, headed by the state’s Chief Secretary/Education Secretary. Implementation is the responsibility of the **State Project Office (SPO)**, headed by the **State Project Director (SPD)**. Additional support is provided by a range of organisations, including the **State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT)**, and the **State Institute of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT)** and the **State Resource Group (SRG)**.
- At the *district* level, programme planning and management are the responsibility of the **District Project Committee** headed by the Chief of the Zilla Parishad (District Council). The project is implemented by the **District Project Office (DPO)**, headed by a district Primary Education Officer. The DPO employs a **District Project Co-ordinator (DPC)**, and assistant project co-ordinators, to carry out the day-to-day work. DPOs also work closely with department of education staff. District level structure is supported by the **District Institute of Education and Training (DIET)** and **District Resource Groups (DRGs)**. Some districts also have **Block Project Implementation Committees**, **Block Resource Centres** and **Cluster Resource Centres**.
- At the *village* level, the **Village Education Committee (VEC)**, **Mother-Teacher Association (MTA)** and **Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)** oversee programme implementation.

### Coverage

Launched in November 1994, DPEP implementation began in 42 Districts spread over 7 states. Within India as a whole there are some 476 districts (with an average of 1.8 million people each) in a total of 25 states and

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example: *DPEP Guidelines* Government of India, 1994; World Bank *DPEP: Staff Appraisal Report* November 1994.

seven union territories. At the time of preparing this report, DPEP has expanded, in a phased manner, to some 193 Districts across 15 states. There are plans for further expansion.

### *Funding*

International donors are playing a major role in the financial support of DPEP. These include: the World Bank, the European Commission, DFID, the Government of the Netherlands, and UNICEF. An important mechanism for DPEP progress monitoring is the Joint Review Mission process: missions, at six-monthly intervals, in which government and donor representatives participate jointly.

As will be returned to and elaborated upon below, DPEP is not a self-consciously defined SWAp, nor is it recognised as such by donors or the Government. However, DPEP bears many of the characteristics of a SWAp. There is much within and about it, to contribute to the wider study.

### **Report Structure**

Beyond this introductory section, the report is structured into the following main sections:

- Key Observations on the SWAp Context
- The Extent to which Gender is Articulated as a Goal
- Tools, Concepts and Approaches used to Mainstream Gender at Sector Level
- Effectiveness of the Approaches Used to Date
- Lessons and Recommendations

### **Limitations**

The main limitations of the study were:

- The very short time available in-country for the field study, which meant that it was impossible to do a field visit and interview state and district level personnel;
- Extremely wide diversity of opinions and perceptions around DPEP and gender mainstreaming within the programme, reflecting the diversity of the programme and its impact itself. We have tried, therefore, to present a balance of what were seen to be both positive and negative aspects of the programme.

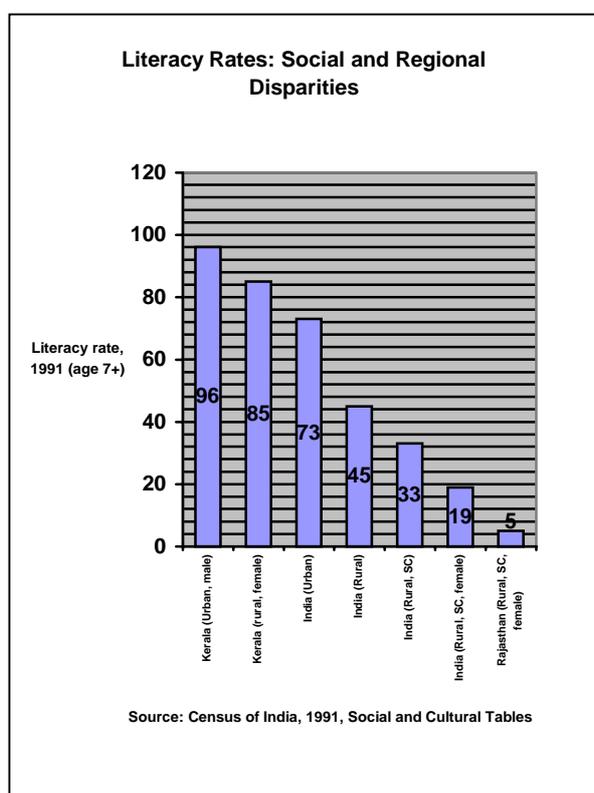
## 2: Key Observations in the SWAP Context

Two key dimensions of the SWAp context are considered here: firstly, the socio-cultural, political and educational context in which DPEP resides in India as a whole; secondly, the extent to which DPEP exhibits the characteristics of a SWAp. Each is considered in turn.

### DPEP and the Indian Context

#### General Background

In a country as large and diverse as India, with such limited scope to explore contextual issues here, it is difficult to make meaningful generalisations. The aim of this section is consequently limited to describing some of the main characteristics and relevant variations, with a view to setting DPEP in some form of context, however basic.



India is a country of enormous size and diversity, containing one-sixth of humanity. Some of India's states are the size of a large country in themselves: Uttar Pradesh, for example, has a population of over 160 million. At the state level, by whatever indicator is used, there are great contextual differences (see box). For example, urban Kerala has almost universal literacy, while rural Rajasthan has almost zero literacy. The scale and complexity of India has particular implications in terms of understanding the shape of DPEP as a SWAp, and the particular importance attached to education as a means of combating poverty.

#### Poverty

In India, 'the extent of human deprivation is staggering'<sup>3</sup>. One third of the total number of absolute poor in the world (35-46% of India's population, depending on the measure used) live in India. Furthermore, ul Haq estimates that two thirds are 'capability poor'<sup>4</sup> – that is to say, do not receive the minimum level of education and health care defined as necessary for functioning human capabilities.

#### Gender

Women bear the brunt of human deprivation in India. There are 927 women to every 1000 men, indicating that the missing women were either aborted before birth, or died before reaching adulthood. Poor girls and women in particular face nutritional discrimination within the family<sup>5</sup>. Over two thirds of the female adult population is illiterate, and far fewer girls than boys go to school<sup>6</sup>. Generally speaking, women's work is undervalued and unrecognised relative to men's, they work longer hours than men, and carry the major share

<sup>3</sup> ul Haq (1997) Human Development in South Asia

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Menon-Sen, K. (1998) Moving from Policy to Practice: A Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for UNDP India

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

of the burden of unpaid family and community work. Women generally earn an estimated 75% of what men earn for doing the same work. Women tend to work in the informal sector, where wages are lower, and where labour laws do not cover them. Within organisations, women generally hold lower-paid jobs<sup>7</sup>.

Different socialisation processes tend to apply to boys and girls; furthermore women may face violence inside and outside the family throughout their lives.

### ***Axes of disadvantage***

The intersection of gender with poverty and other axes of disadvantage (outlined below) is a complex one and particularly important for understanding and addressing gender in the Indian context.

***Caste/tribe:*** Scheduled Castes (SC) account for 17% of the population. Along with scheduled tribes (ST), they continue to lag behind other groups in terms of human development, and are victims of systemic discrimination and violence. The Indian constitution offers SCs/STs a range of guarantees of equality and affirmative action, including reservations in education and employment, welfare schemes and political representation. While legislation has been positive, its implementation remains patchy, and entrenched attitudes remain, particularly in rural areas.

By way of illustration of what this can mean to a SC/ST child, the PROBE<sup>8</sup> report describes how a ‘system of multiple tracks’ has developed. In one village in UP a ‘social apartheid’ has developed with Dalit children going to government school, while high-caste children go to private school. Furthermore, school infrastructure tends to be better in less-deprived areas. For example, in Madhya Pradesh, the percentage of schools with ‘pukkah’<sup>9</sup> buildings ranges from 88% in Indore (prosperous) to 2% in Bastar (tribal)<sup>10</sup>. In school, children from different groups receive different treatment. In some schools Dalit children sit separately from others, while in other schools children of some castes sat on benches, others on the floor<sup>11</sup>.

Entrenched caste discrimination is also an important determinant of achievement - it is important to consider the dynamics of classrooms as well as decision making. Social discrimination at school, e.g. by upper caste teachers of Dalit children, is a common cause of dropout, especially for disadvantaged families. Illiterate/poor/low caste parents often find it difficult to get a hearing from the teacher, and help children with studies.<sup>12</sup>

***Other issues:*** Among other issues, the phenomenon of child labour is an important consideration. Disability is also a big problem: an estimated 10% of children are disabled. The Persons with Disability Act of 1995 addresses this. Migrants are among the poorest and most stubborn in terms of ‘out of school’ groups. Natural disasters, such as the recent hurricane in Orissa, can devastate whole areas and tend to impact most significantly on poor communities.

Prejudice and discrimination based on gender, caste and other ‘axes’ described above are deeply entrenched in India as in other countries, and tend to exacerbate poverty and low educational achievement. The point of outlining here the different elements of poverty and disadvantage is to stress that within these groups, girls and women tend to be most vulnerable. Thus, gender issues cannot be discussed or addressed without

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<sup>7</sup> Menon-Sen (1998)

<sup>8</sup> The Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE report) is a report on the state of primary education in India funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), carried out in collaboration with the Centre for Development Economics at Delhi School of Economics. The report was based on extensive fieldwork in 1996 in rural areas of 5 states: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh. The report is innovative and groundbreaking in its non-academic and accessible presentation. It is of particular relevance to this report, since it focuses on educational issues (including social and cultural factors) at the village/school level.

<sup>9</sup> A permanent structure of brick or stone

<sup>10</sup> PROBE report (1998)

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

reference to poverty, and its complex interaction with caste, class, and ethnicity. The attitudinal shift required is vast, both in a wider context and in terms of addressing educational processes and institutions: this is the challenge for DPEP. The next section therefore will describe the political and institutional context within which DPEP operates.

### **Political and institutional context**

The characteristics of DPEP, which define it in some ways as a sector-wide approach, can be seen as a product of India's institutional, social and cultural heritage, as well as a result of the colonial legacy. The context DPEP addresses has been determined in many ways by circumstances at independence: a secular state, comprising disparate ethnic and religious groups. This is reflected in constitutional commitments (see box).

After independence, India's economy was highly protected; however since the 1980s it has been undergoing a gradual process of liberalisation, revival of domestic investment, and increasing private foreign investment. A growth rate of over 5 per cent per annum has now been achieved, with related gains for some sections of Indian society. However, questions have been raised about the extent to which the benefits of new policies, and any wealth created have filtered down to the poorer groups of society.

### **Decentralisation**

India has been pursuing a policy of decentralisation: that is, increasing devolution of power to states. The rise of regional parties, and decline in political cohesion, has accelerated this process. India also has a strong tradition of activism, local participation and community mobilisation, recently revived and systematised in the form of *Panchayati Raj*<sup>13</sup> - a kind of local government that runs somewhat parallel to the Government administration. *Panchayati Raj* was mandated by constitutional amendments (1992). Affirmative policies mean that representation in the panchayats of women, SC/ST is increasing, but there is still a long way to go<sup>14</sup>. Linking in with the *Panchayati Raj* is very important for DPEP.

#### **Constitution of India**

- Free and compulsory education to all children up to age 14.
- Increasing education spending to 6% GDP.
- UPE by 2000.
- Full literacy by 2005
- Provision for equality between the sexes and positive discrimination.
- Eliminating gender bias in education by 2005

So far, however, the functioning of the village panchayat in many villages is far from democratic. The PROBE report notes that in many of the villages studied the Sarpanch (the village head of the Panchayat) takes most of the decisions, thus popular concerns are not necessarily represented. Many cases of collusion between Sarpanch and teacher (both in positions of power) were also recorded; though in some cases teacher and Sarpanch were in conflict. There are significant state-level variations in the robustness of local level democratic structures – the decentralisation process needs to be strengthened in states where progress has been slow.

### **Gol and social issues**

Since Independence, there has been a strong focus on socialism/poverty alleviation. Among the key pro-poor policies and programmes, relevant to this study, that India has succeeded in establishing since independence are:

- Reservation policies for SCs/STs
- Legislative measures
- A wide range of employment, safety net and subsidy programmes for the poor
- NHRC (National Human Rights Commission)
- 1997 Supreme Court Legislation making sexual harassment unconstitutional

<sup>13</sup> ul Haq (1997)

<sup>14</sup> DFID (1999) India: Country Strategy Paper

The numbers, status and role of women, whether in government institutions or in the private sector workplace, are all a strong subject of debate. While government structures do make special provision for women, women are still significantly under-represented in governance and decision-making positions. At present, less than 8% of parliamentary seats, 6% of cabinet positions, 4% of High Court and Supreme Courts positions are occupied by women<sup>15</sup>. A severe problem for DPEP is the systemic under-representation of women in government, both in terms of managing and administering the programme and providing a focal point to keep gender concerns high on the agenda.

### **Government Culture**

While constitutional and legal commitments are in some ways impressive, the *implementation* of these commitments, and their impact on poor people is less even, an issue that has important implications for the SWAp and gender mainstreaming. According to some studies, standards of governance in India are low and said to be declining<sup>16</sup>. While senior echelons of civil service at the central and state levels, particularly members of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) are well trained and committed, their effectiveness is constrained by weaknesses in the system within which they work<sup>17</sup>. There are well-established mechanisms for transparency and accountability, but often they are not enforced. Capacity and support at the lower levels of public service are limited. Bureaucracy is inflexible and slow, and systems of patronage entrenched. Corruption is widespread, criminal elements are involved in elected bodies in some states, and it is difficult to bring corruption to book<sup>18</sup>.

There is also significant bias against the private sector, legal protection for public sector workers, and a tendency of Trade Unions to oppose change and political opposition – all of these factors make reform difficult and slow, and have significant impact on attempts to introduce a programme with the change potential of DPEP.

### **GoI and Donor relations**

The World Bank identifies India as a country where good social and economic policy and a favourable institutional environment mean that development assistance could have a big effect on growth and poverty reduction<sup>19</sup>. However, although India is among the top recipients of development assistance, aid constitutes only 0.6 % of GNP<sup>20</sup>. This has significant implications for GoI/donor relations, in that donors have significantly less influence, and have to adopt a far more ‘hands off’ approach than in some other developing countries. It is worth noting the point here that, in such a context, the Sector Wide Approach perhaps presents more opportunities for real development cooperation than project modalities.

Reflecting GoI moves towards decentralisation, the major donors are in the process of moving towards focusing assistance on states which are committed to reforms and tackling poverty<sup>21</sup>. However, World Bank loans to states are still channelled through the centre<sup>22</sup>. Some bilateral agencies, including SIDA, have cut programmes since the 1998 nuclear tests. DFID has identified the states of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh for focusing its programme, while the Dutch are focusing on Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Kerala, and the Danish on Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. This has caused great debate, since it implies a move away from states with the greatest numbers of poor people. However, it also means a shift in spending to areas where funds may be used more effectively, and also, some have argued, to areas that are most profitable for donor governments<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Menon-Sen (1998)

<sup>16</sup> Dreze and Sen (1995) India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity

<sup>17</sup> DFID (1999) India: Country Strategy Paper

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*

<sup>19</sup> World Bank (1997) India: Achievements and Challenges in reducing poverty.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas, B.S. (2000) ‘India: because the market tells them so’ in *The Reality of Aid 2000*, Earthscan.

<sup>21</sup> DFID (1999) India: Country Strategy Paper

<sup>22</sup> World Bank (?) India assistance strategy

<sup>23</sup> Thomas, B.S. (2000)

Greater donor co-ordination is needed for SWAp for supporting institutional policy reform than with the traditional donor agenda of ‘moving money’. However, donor co-ordination does not have an entirely happy history in India. In 1994, UNDP set up Inter-Agency Working Groups dealing with, among other things, gender and development, HIV/AIDS, and primary education. In 1996 multi/bi-sectoral co-ordination groups with multilaterals, bilaterals and sometimes leading INGOs were established. However, irregular meetings, lack of commitment by members meant that these groups achieved little<sup>24</sup>. This point having been made, DPEP itself represents something of an exemplar of successful donor cooperation, not least through the Joint Review process. But there remain challenges. For example, the increasing state focus of donors, manifested in DPEP in that individual donors are focusing assistance on particular states, has led to a situation where the DPEP ‘culture’ is significantly different in a World Bank sponsored state than in a DFID sponsored state. This is a significant departure from the ‘pooling’ of donor funds envisaged in a ‘strong’ SWAp, for example Uganda’s ESIP<sup>25</sup>.

One clear success – in terms of DPEP’s influence on the broader environment of education policy - is provided by the GOI Sarva Shikish Abhiyan (education for all) programme that aims to universalise elementary education throughout the country. The programme has replicated some DPEP implementation arrangements, and built extensively on the DPEP experience.

### **Civil Society**

The Indian tradition of self-help and community mobilisation is also evident in the many NGOs operating in India. According to DFID estimates, for example, there are between ten and several hundred thousand NGOs, and 30 UK-based international NGOs. Central and state governments increasingly recognise the value of working with NGOs, and DPEP has been able to link its work with local NGOs. However, there has been a greater inclination to do this with regard to some aspects of the programme than others. Generally, States and Districts have been very happy to involve NGOs on a voluntary, that is to say non-budgetary, basis to assist in community mobilisation activities. There are far fewer instances of NGOs being provided with DPEP funding to take on aspects of programme implementation. It has been commented that this reflects a fundamental inconsistency in approaches to NGOs:

*‘Curiously enough, while many official donors have few problems divesting the state of its responsibilities in such sectors as power, transport, etc handing the same over to the private sector, they sing a different tune when it comes to NGO involvement in the social sector. Here they emphasise that NGOs should not end up doing the job of the state but should instead serve as models for the state to do its job better’<sup>26</sup>*

There are a number of explanations. It is often said, with some degree of fairness, that NGOs lack capacity. But DPEP is an opportunity to help build this capacity. This is not always recognised. There have also been a number of cases in India (not DPEP related) of “bogus,” corrupt or incompetent NGOs, and consequent misuse of funds. This makes people cautious; again, not necessarily unreasonably. Part of the explanation is also to do with the fact that those in management and other senior positions in DPEP tend to be from Government/Public sector backgrounds. They either have a vested interest in pursuing government/public sector agendas, or simply have a mind set, as a result of their experience and conditioning, that tends to look towards the government/public sector for implementation solutions.

A somewhat similar observation can be made about the emphasis that has been placed on formal education, as opposed to non-formal alternatives. It is not without significance that the main strength and experience of NGOs is for the most part in the area of the latter.

These observations would appear to confirm potential weaknesses of the SWAp approach, along the lines of a tendency towards homogenous, state-led solutions. DPEP has been caught, again arguably a little unfairly, in this syndrome. At the outset it was subject to some criticism that rather too much emphasis was being

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas, B.S. (2000)

<sup>25</sup> See Seel and Gibbard (2000)

<sup>26</sup> Thomas (2000)

placed on formal education solutions. Now that it has moved more recently to increase the emphasis on alternative schooling possibilities it is now facing criticism of a second kind. There is an expressed fear of alternative systems and educational routes becoming a second class/inferior alternative to the mainstream. Such a development has the potential to be especially invidious if inferior alternative provision becomes a major domain for the education of children of one gender, or any other disadvantaged group. The difficult dilemma is returned to below, in Sections 4.5.4 and 6.15.

There are further perspectives on the role of civil society worth identifying here. Some have expressed the concern that DPEP is under such great pressure to deliver, particularly at the local level, that it risks in some cases ‘passing the buck’ and over-burdening NGOs which lack the capacity to do the job. Others, meanwhile, argue that NGOs could do more.

### **Perceptions**

Perceptions of government, donors, and NGOs are complex and important in understanding the context within which DPEP operates. India boasts strong and independent institutions in the press, judiciary, and bureaucracy: all of these are important for DPEP. Education in particular is often the subject of furious debate in the English-speaking press. For example a recent article on the state of education in India at the start of the new millennium argued:

*If India were to be tested for educating its multitudes, it would score dismally. At the start of the millennium, there is mostly bad news on the education front. Dilapidated schools, demotivated teachers, irresponsible management and powerless parents. A vicious cycle where hopelessness breeds further hopelessness. There is an increase in literacy rates – but it is so slow that the absolute numbers of illiterates keeps rising every year. By international standards India’s performance is dismal...*

*The real problem is the state’s priorities- under-involvement in elementary education where it should be focusing all its energies; over-involvement in higher education where it should encourage independent initiative<sup>27</sup>.*

The extent to which this last statement is true is debatable. DPEP is a manifestation of the major commitment being made to basic education by both Government and donors. But what still counts is that popular perceptions of primary education and DPEP are profoundly influenced by suspicions about donor ‘meddling’ with the education system, and in the case of DPEP particularly concerning its close connections with the World Bank.

### **Educational context**

The scope of this brief contextual overview of the educational context in India is limited to consideration of primary/elementary education only.

### **Elementary education in India: Some facts and myths**

To explore comprehensively the complexity of elementary education in India is, once again, beyond the scope of this report. However, for present purposes, some of the key issues can be introduced by adapting a number of the key facts and myths around elementary education identified in the PROBE report:

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<sup>27</sup> Bhaumik, S.N. (2000) ‘Setting no standards’, India Today, 31 January

## **Structures and institutions**

Education is the joint responsibility of state and central governments. While it is again difficult to generalise, states do have some common problems, including a lack of financial resources and a heavily

### **Fact 1: Low achievements**

The enormity of the problem is often underestimated, because of success in middle class, power-holding circles

### **Fact 2: High disparities**

While illiteracy has been virtually eliminated in Kerala, in the states of Bihar, MP, Rajasthan and UP, *the majority of children in the 10-14 age group are illiterate*. The gender gap is one of highest in the world.

### **Fact 3: Slow progress**

The increase of literacy rates is so slow that the *absolute* number of illiterates is rising, because of population increase

### **Fact 4: State inertia**

In some states, elementary education continues to have low priority, while disadvantaged communities are neglected. Conversely in states where education has been prioritised (Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala) impressive gains have been made

### **Myth 1: Parents are not interested**

The majority of parents attach great importance to their children's education – but the system fails them. Parents provide a useful scapegoat for political apathy.

### **Myth 2: Child labour is the main obstacle**

Although the problem of child labour is 'a disgrace', it is often over-simplified in terms of an explanation of why children are out of school: i.e. that children don't go to school because they have to work, rather than they work because they have *dropped out of a sub-standard school system*.

### **Myth 3: Elementary education is free**

Schooling is only free in the narrow sense that admission fees in govt schools are negligible. In *real* terms, the average cost per child per year is Rs 318: significant for poor families with several school-going children.

### **Myth 4: Schools are available**

Conventional concepts of access to school are *geographical*; this ignores *social* distance, i.e. exclusion because of caste differences. Even where schools are available, they are often inadequate.

*Adapted from: the PROBE report*

over-burdened management structure. This is partly due to the massive increase in size of schooling system demanded by UPE (and DPEP), and of course, the rapid growth in population<sup>28</sup>.

At the District level, for example, three to four service assistants are responsible for keeping the records of thousands of teachers. Added to the multiplicity of pay scales, arbitrary transfer policies, and politicised implementation, the result is a stalling of the system so that many teachers resort to litigation or agitation. Thus, each PROBE state has thousands of cases relating to teachers pending: in some cases, this absorbs an incredible 20-30% of District Education Officers' time<sup>29</sup>.

## UPE

The right to UPE is enshrined in the Indian Constitution, and strengthened by India's ratification of the International Declaration of Education for All (Jomtien, 1990). The result is that DPEP operates under a huge pressure to achieve UPE, often interpreted in terms of 100% enrolment. However, increased enrolment rates do not imply improved educational achievement. In fact, some have argued the pressure to increase enrolment has had unfortunate side effects, not least on achievement levels.

While enrolment rates have been rising, the PROBE report points to gross inaccuracies in enrolment figures (albeit using a sample of non-DPEP districts): in some cases as much as 10-25% above true figures. Teachers routinely inflate enrolment figures through under-age enrolment, nominal enrolment, double enrolment, and fake enrolment. While it would be simplistic to suggest that this exaggeration is due to pressure from UPE, this undoubtedly has a role. Also, the report suggests, increased enrolment rates can prevent transfer, and gain incentives for the teacher. An incidental side-effect is that dropout figures may thus be exaggerated.

## Participation/Mobilisation

In practice, many Village Education Committees (VECs) are dormant. Less than half of PROBE sample schools had a functional VEC (defined as having met more than once in previous 12 months).

*By and large... VECs seem to be token institutions, with neither teachers nor parents expecting much from them... One reason for this lack of dynamism seems to be that these committees were formed in a top-down manner, based on government directives rather than any felt need of the community.*<sup>30</sup>

Thus, although communities in India have always engaged with the government around schooling, the presence of a VEC does not in itself mean anything; much less is it proof of gender equality in participation and decision-making around educational issues.

## Gender and Education

The percentage of girls enrolled in school classes in India and the percentage female teachers are detailed in the following two tables:

Percentage of Girls Enrolled in Classes: India															
	Grades I-V			Grades VI-VIII			Grades IX-X			Grades XI-XII			Grades I-XII		
	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST	All	SC	ST
R	41.96	40.47	40.96	36.43	33.02	34.04	32.23	28.89	29.88	29.76	25.53	26.29	39.8	38.21	39.04
U	46.71	45.97	45.52	45.06	42.69	42.73	41.72	37.41	38.24	39.73	34.03	29.64	45.06	43.52	43.07
T	43.16	41.66	41.45	39.62	36.25	35.77	36.47	32.31	32.10	35.93	30.29	27.62	41.44	39.61	39.61
<b>Key:</b>	R = Rural			U = Urban			T = Total			SC = Scheduled Caste			ST = Scheduled Tribe		
<i>Source: Sixth All India Educational Survey, NCERT, 1998</i>															

<sup>28</sup> PROBE report (1998)

<sup>29</sup> PROBE report (1998)

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

Percentage of Female Teachers: India			
	Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary
Rural	23.50	23.09	17.84
Urban	61.29	55.45	43.52
Total	31.61	34.68	33.18
<i>Source: and Sixth All India Educational Survey, NCERT, 1998</i>			

It should be noted that neither of these tables reveals the even greater disparities that exist in some states and between districts.

A crucial link between widespread education and social justice relates to gender equity. In so far as endemic illiteracy among Indian women enhances their powerlessness in the family and society, better schooling opportunities for girls are an essential step towards gender equality<sup>31</sup>.

India has a long history of educational disparities being used to consolidate social inequalities based on class, caste, and gender. That is, that while lack of educational opportunity may have the effect of disadvantaging an individual, the social group or gender into which they are born also limits the educational choices available to them. Thus, a vicious cycle of privilege and poverty is perpetuated: again, a great challenge for DPEP. The next section will consider DPEP as a SWAp.

### DPEP and SWAp Characteristics

The Table below lists the basic elements characterising a Sector Wide approach, as contributing to a working definition identified in the Inception Report. Against these criteria, an attempt has been made to identify the extent to which similar characteristics are exhibited by DPEP.

Basic Elements Characterising a Sector-Wide Approach:	Extent to which exhibited by DPEP:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An agreed overall financial framework in which DPEP is incorporated is not well defined, though sustainability issues have been explored. Donor funds do, however, contribute as a component part of Government's macro-economic framework.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments lead a consultative process with stakeholders and investors, including development agencies to define:</li> <li>• an overall sector policy framework;</li> <li>• priorities, objectives and performance measures;</li> <li>• expenditure programmes;</li> <li>• institutional reform and capacity building;</li> <li>• jointly agreed management, reporting, and accounting arrangements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments define a macro-economic framework within which medium term expenditure frameworks determine the resources available for individual sectors.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major donors jointly support the process and the practice of the sector programme, preferably using</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major DPEP donors jointly support the process and the practice of the sector</li> </ul>

<sup>31</sup> PROBE report (1998)

common procedures	programme, for the most part using common procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance is commissioned by governments rather than donor agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Government commissions almost all technical assistance in DPEP. Where there have been minor exceptions, this expertise has been commissioned by donors at the request of Government.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Additional Points of Note:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DPEP is not a self-consciously defined SWAp, and is not recognised as such by donors or the Government. Rather, as indicated above, DPEP bears many of the characteristics of a SWAp.</li> <li>• DPEP is not a “full” SWAp, to the extent that:</li> <li>• it is limited to addressing the primary sector: i.e. it excludes upper primary, secondary, and tertiary provision.</li> <li>• it retains an element of separate identity from the mainstream of educational provision: as reflected, for example, in the constitution of “registered societies” for DPEP funding arrangements; and a number of “DPEP” staff appointments.</li> </ul>	

In summary, while not a “pure” SWAp, DPEP manifestly bears many of the characteristics of a SWAp and further examination of gender mainstreaming considerations in this context is likely to be extremely instructive in relation to the aims of the study.

In bringing this Section of the report to a conclusion, a crucial question the study was charged with addressing at this point is the extent to which DPEP is linked to, and takes into account, the key elements of context described above. The short answer is that, on the whole, DPEP is appropriately linked to these contextual elements and takes them into account to a very high degree. The basis for such an assertion will emerge in the Sections to follow, examining the extent to which gender is articulated as a goal within DPEP, and the tools, concepts and approaches used to mainstream gender. Indeed, essentially, DPEP was conceived as a response to prevailing contextual factors. Nonetheless, while great efforts are being made to address gender issues, because the constraints are so great, India still faces enormous challenges in translating policy level commitments into real improvements in the lives of poor men and women.

### 3: THE EXTENT TO WHICH GENDER IS ARTICULATED AS A GOAL

#### Overall goal

One document, more than any other, provides a succinct summary of the essence of DPEP, including its objectives, parameters, and appropriate patterns of appraisal, implementation, management and monitoring. That document is the DPEP Guidelines<sup>32</sup>. The DPEP Guidelines constituted from the outset, and continue to be, a key reference document, or handbook, for all involved in DPEP.

The DPEP Guidelines thus represent the most appropriate place for beginning to examine the extent to which gender is articulated as a goal. The DPEP Guidelines specify that in order to achieve UPE, a focus on increasing access must be accompanied by a holistic planning and management approach which 'should incorporate a gender perspective in all aspects of the planning and implementation process' (1.1.3.iv.b). There is thus a fundamental recognition that a gender *mainstreaming* approach is necessary.

As one of the five key objectives of DPEP (see Section 1.2 above), gender is addressed specifically: objective 3, states that DPEP is seeking to reduce differences in enrolment, dropout rates, and learning achievement between boys and girls to less than 5 per cent.

Among the "nine pillars" guiding the planning process, DPEP Guidelines indicate that DPEP planning should include "a marked gender focus to provide for improvement in access, retention and achievement levels of girls education, and also to permeate gender sensitivity through all aspects of DPEP planning, including teacher training/recruitment, textbooks, and other educational facilities and incentives".

Additionally, as part of the district plan appraisal process, DPEP Guidelines specify, for example, that plans should be appraised with reference to the criteria of equity. Among other things, evidence is demanded of specific intervention strategies for girls.

The focus on girls' education in DPEP is thus strong. While girls' education is well embedded as an operational focus at the *policy* level, the wider mainstreaming agenda is not to the same degree. In other words, the more long-term, mainstreaming objective (as opposed to the specific target of girls' enrolment/access) is not quite so clearly articulated as a goal. As was the case in parallel country studies in Ghana and Uganda, therefore, there is a tendency to focus on gendered access, rather than quality issues.

Observations of this kind are not levelled as criticisms, but rather to suggest future challenges. The focus so far on targeting may well have been the most feasible and appropriate practical response to the enormity of the task in hand, and especially bearing in mind the baseline from which DPEP which started. However, in respect of gender targeting *within* a mainstreaming framework, it will inform subsequent discussion if a number of further key observations are made here.

#### Gender and Mainstreaming

The concept of gender mainstreaming as articulated by DAC has two clear elements: an integration of a gender focus into planning, design and implementation; and a move towards equitable influence on decision-making processes around the programme. A common perception is that DPEP incorporates the first of these elements to very large degree (although this is debatable). However, the second, more political, issue, which involves issues of representation and political power within key government structures and institutions, is clearly addressed to a far lesser extent.

Moreover, as noted immediately above, a particularly interesting dimension of the gender perspective, and especially within the context of DPEP, is the distinction between gender mainstreaming and gender targeting. The two approaches can be mutually supporting and complementary. Indeed, as noted in the *Inception Report* for this study:

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<sup>32</sup> *DPEP Guidelines* Government of India, 1994

*A mainstreaming strategy does not preclude initiatives specifically directed towards women. Similarly, initiatives targeted directly to men are necessary and complementary as long as they promote gender equity.*

But there is also a capacity for an element of tension in that gender mainstreaming is a concept that is arguably closer to a desired ideal, whereas gender targeting can be a valid means of moving closer to that ideal, but is less of an ideal in itself. The latter concept is also somewhat more limited than the former. There are also potential dangers. Longwe alludes to a scenario that may develop if targeting detracts from mainstreaming, leading to a kind of ‘policy evaporation’:

*‘attention to policy commitments on women’s participation or gender equality is not systematic in the planning and implementation cycle. Analyses prepared... in support of project formulation may include references to these commitments, but often in a separate section rather than as an integral part of the analysis. The policy commitment becomes increasingly less visible in the process of specifying project objectives, anticipated results, implementation strategies and evaluation. A broad commitment to improving the relative position of women and reducing gender disparities is often reduced to a “women’s component” that has a very small claim on project resources, or a focus on counting the number of women in various project activities.’<sup>33</sup>*

An analysis of the articulation of gender in DPEP documents reveals a number of important issues. Firstly, it seems that very often girls’ education is subsumed under a wider goal of improving access and achievement – rather than an end in itself. That is to say, educating girls is mechanistic, linked to improving productivity and other development goals as opposed to linking to wider gender issues in the Indian context.

Secondly, while a strategic focus on girls’ education may be the only realistic way forward, given the huge gender disparities evident in India, the danger is that focus on girls obscures and distracts attention from a long-term vision based on changing the complex power structures that ultimately cause the restrictions and barriers to girls participating fully in education, and thus limiting the potentially radical impact of the programme.

Thirdly, girls are often linked to other categories of disadvantage – for example the disabled, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. This collapses the huge variety of experience and situations within the category ‘girls’, and militates against an understanding of the complex interactions of gender with, say, caste, class, and age. This also reinforces the perception that *being a girl* is in itself the problem, where in fact wider gender relations and gendered power structures are at the root of the problem.

Much of any potential tension between gender mainstreaming and gender targeting can be removed through achieving appropriate balance. Yet, there is a further challenge in that what might constitute “appropriate balance” should probably not be static. As capacity is built, and increased development understanding is generated and disseminated, it may be desirable that the balance should shift.

An analysis of DPEP from a gender perspective reveals that the programme is seeking to reduce gender inequity through both mainstreaming and targeting. But, with so much progress having been made, it may thus now be appropriate for the balance in DPEP to shift, too. The commitment to girls’ education, clearly articulated in policy and budgets, may now have laid a foundation for more complex gender mainstreaming goals and commitments, and ones that would tend to reduce ‘policy evaporation’ of the kind described by Longwe.

Such a view fits well with the idea of a dynamic, as opposed to static, interpretation of Guidelines, goals and objectives: allowing for changes to reflect learning and experience. Importantly, DPEP recognised at the outset that the Guidelines would need to evolve to reflect learning, experience, and changing circumstances.

It is noted that there has indeed been some evolution of the DPEP Guidelines, though not relating to gender specifically, as far as this study has ascertained. It is also noted that while the need for changes to the Guidelines was anticipated, no express mechanism was put in place to encourage or ensure the critical reappraisal required, especially on a systematic basis. Whether such a mechanism would be helpful is a

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33 Longwe, quoted in DAC source book on concepts and approaches linked to gender equality

moot point. In recommendations made for future SWAPs, drawing from the DPEP experience (see below), it is suggested that such a mechanism might have utility; less would be left to chance.

## Programme components

The main programme components, and the extent to which gender is presently articulated within them, are outlined in the following table.

Access	Detail	Extent of articulation of gender as a goal
Community mobilisation	Promotion of education through campaigns (using, theatre dance, and music), rallies, workshops, meetings, camps, 'melas' (fairs), radio, TV and print media.	Special melas for women, mother-daughter, father-daughter are used to sensitise community to the importance of educating girls.
Village Education Committees (VECs)	Committees are supported or established to act as interface between communities and education system. Role varies, to include supervising construction, raise funds, development of education plans, appointment of para teachers, monitoring and micro-planning.	Quotas for women on VECs. Link with Mahila Samakhya and mothers' groups.
Construction of classrooms and new schools	DPEP covers construction of new schools, maintenance, provision of water and sanitation facilities to a max 24% of budget.	Construction of toilets recognised as necessary for retention of girls.
Alternative Schooling	Alternative schools aim to provide flexible schooling options in remote, small habitations and for stubborn out-of-school groups.	The majority of out-of-school children are girls; hence the target group of AS schools is mostly girls. Mostly female teachers are recruited.
Integrated education for the disabled (IED)	Establishment of State advisory groups for integrated education; district level IED co-ordinators; training for teachers etc.	None articulated.
Quality	Detail	Extent of articulation of gender as a goal
Curriculum and teaching-learning materials and processes	Textbooks, supplementary reading materials, pupil evaluation.	Materials developed with attention to gender content.
Teacher development	Training, recruitment	Tracking of recruitment of female teachers.

Academic support institutions	Cluster resource centres, block resource centres, District Institutes of Education Training (DIETs), State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs)	None articulated.
Institutional development and capacity building	Creating and strengthening state level institutional capacity for educational planning and management (SIEMATs, SCERT, IIMs etc). District level (DIET, BRC, CRC); research on educational planning and management; capacity building for VECs, Panchayat Raj bodies.	None articulated.
Distance education	Distance inputs and materials for teachers and other primary education personnel.	None articulated.
Early Childhood Education (ECE)	Financing expansion of ECE centres and supporting existing centres set up under ICDS; development of pre-school materials, training for workers	ECE recognised as important for increasing girls' attendance, in that it frees them of childcare responsibilities.
Convergence	Establishment of linkages with other services, sectors, NGOs etc	Linkages with Mahila Samakhya.
<b>Management and information</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Extent of articulation of gender as a goal</b>
Planning and implementation	State level perspective plans developed for 5-7 years; appraisal of plans; preparation of district level, annual plans; annual workplan and budget (AWP and B)	State gender plans mandatory part of planning process.
Research and evaluation	Baseline assessment studies	Baseline studies on gender issues part of project formulation.
Management Information systems	PMIS, EMIS	Gender disaggregated data produced.
Supervision and monitoring	JRM, ISM	Some JRMs have focused specifically on gender.
Appraisal		None articulated.

**Mainstreaming Gender through Sector Wide Approaches in Education: India Case Study**

The section that follows will consider the tools, concepts and approaches used to mainstream gender at sector level in respect of these key components.

## 4: Tools, Concepts and Approaches Used to Mainstream Gender at Sector Level

In this section we understand **concepts** (e.g. gender) to be the analytical underpinnings of broad **approaches** (e.g. mainstreaming) within which specific **tools** (e.g. quotas for women) are used.

For ease of discussion, concepts, tools and approaches are categorised and examined under the following subheads: analytical, financial, management, data and research, process and implementation, policy and planning, resources and infrastructure, linkages. Each is considered in turn, with specific reference to relevant DPEP programme components.

### Management

As was established in contextual discussion in Section 2, the influences on DPEP in terms of gender are diverse and draw on a range of different influences, both external and internal. The same could be said of DPEP's general approach to management structures – as far as it is possible to generalise, given the diversity of approaches between states.

To reiterate, a fully mainstreamed approach implies that gender concerns are fully integrated; that is to say, all individuals pay attention to gender issues in all aspects of their work, and that all sections and processes of an institution, plan or programme are therefore infused with gender. This implies that there is no need for separate women's/gender cells. The problem with this is that without vigilance, gender 'falls off' the agenda because it is not the responsibility of one person or section. (See Section 3 for a further exploration of 'policy evaporation').

An alternative is the WID approach, where within institutions separate gender cells are responsible for promoting gender concerns and providing a gender focus within organisations. The danger with this is that people assume that gender has been dealt with within the cell, and they therefore don't have to take it on board. Gender is 'ticked off', despite the fact that the gender cell may be marginalised, under-resourced, unsupported and not taken seriously.

The reality is that few organisations or programmes conform to either of these models in entirety: and so it is with DPEP. Within the DPEP Bureau, there are people with specific responsibility for gender. However, important elements of DPEP's gender work come under the responsibilities of an organisation perhaps best described as a quango, Education Consultants of India Ltd. (EdCIL). EdCIL has specific responsibilities in relation to DPEP (especially in terms of research, monitoring and of particular interest to this report, gender training), but also interests beyond DPEP. Staff are a mixture of government employees and private consultants. Its relationship with government is not always clear, and occasionally controversial. Within EdCIL, the gender 'unit' is considered rather small and under-resourced.

At the state level, designated gender co-ordinators have responsibility for coordinating and focusing all gender aspects of their programmes. At the district level, gender resource groups (trained by State Gender Co-ordinators) and teachers (also gender trained) take responsibility for gender aspects of the programme.

Thus, while in theory, gender responsibility runs through the programme from centre to village level, in practice the evidence points to a weakening and 'de-prioritisation' of gender away from the centre. District level staff do not view the rather abstract concept of gender as an issue that is relevant in the context of their own lives, the people they work with or the DPEP programme itself. They do not necessarily speak the language of gender that appears in the documents and is spoken within donor organisations and the DPEP Bureau. Thus, at the very most, a focus on girls' education, while less strategic and short-termist, becomes a more sensible focus from the perspective of pressured staff in DPEP offices and schools

Throughout case study interviews on the subject of gender management, the state gender co-ordinators were almost universally described as a weak link in the SWAp chain, due to:

- A tendency to come from middle class, academic background as opposed to activists
- Lack of seniority
- Poor training quality

It was also commented that this role is far too great for one person to manage. There has been no time, for example, to follow up training of state gender co-ordinators. What DPEP lacks, it was suggested, is a strong internal lobby fighting for gender. Perhaps the sheer size of the SWAp, compared to a project, can be a problem in terms of maintaining a gender focus.

At the village level, under DPEP, VECs must include at least a third female membership, the rationale being that women are thus empowered within their communities in terms of decision-making about education. However, research studies have highlighted the fact that female participation in VECs is not necessarily an indicator of gender equality – that in fact women tend to be less vocal within the VEC, the balance of decision-making power remains unaltered. One researcher suggested that a further problem faced by VECs is the weight of expectation under which they operate: but VECs cannot achieve UPE by themselves. DPEP is aware of all of these gender factors as relating to VECs and is endeavouring to address them.

To begin to extrapolate from the specific context of DPEP to the general nature of SWAps, much of the potential of SWAps to be responsive to local needs would seem to depend on their ability to recognise, link and work with quality local structures. As one researcher commented in respect of DPEP, VECs are not a new thing - people have been engaging with government about their local school for a very long time. It is difficult to draw further conclusions relating to management and the 'SWAp' nature of DPEP (given the unique decentralised structure), other than to say that management capacity building, in gender terms, at all levels of government, is something that should perhaps be achieved through a SWAp more easily than through a project approach.

## **Analytical**

The articulation of gender in the DPEP guidelines is discussed in [Section 3.2](#). It is interesting to reflect on 1) the process by which gender as it appears in DPEP was arrived at; 2) the understandings of approach to gender in DPEP as articulated by various stakeholders now; and 3) the implications of this for the SWAp.

It is significant that, in the wider international context, thinking on the very subject of gender mainstreaming has undergone quite radical development during the lifetime of DPEP: in other words, ideas as to what might be the most fruitful approaches have moved on to a considerable extent.

### *the process of gender in DPEP policy formation*

As noted above, the articulation of gender in DPEP incorporates a diversity of concepts and approaches that reflects a history of internal and external influences. Recently, the 1986 education policy made what was in some ways a progressive commitment to raising the status of women and girls. However, a change of government resulted in a review of this policy (the Ramamurthi report), the results of which then fed into DPEP.

However, opinions differ as to the extent to which the concept of gender underlying DPEP is 'home-grown', or donor-influenced. Government sources tend to take the view that this is a homegrown policy for the Indian context. An alternative, more controversial view is that the gender focus is to a considerable extent shaped by donor pressure: that the World Bank in particular had considerable influence in terms of the final form of the DPEP Guidelines. This is an important issue in terms of gender mainstreaming because unless the gender concept and the mainstreaming approach is fully "owned," it will not be prioritised by those in charge of implementing the programme.

On balance, in the case of DPEP, it is too simplistic to suggest that those implementing the programme either “own” or simply pay “lip service” to gender mainstreaming. There is a continuum involved, and one that tends to correspond quite closely to a continuum on which “the Centre” is placed at one polarity, and “the Districts” at the other. Those at the “Centre” in senior positions are more likely to be exposed to, and indeed help to shape themselves, international thinking on what is appropriate in the way of gender mainstreaming. They participate as equals in the same international symposia as donor representatives, for example. It also follows that those at the Centre also have the potential to play an especially crucial role, in that they are far better placed than international donors to interpret, understand, and respond to the local level cultural factors that tend to prevent the less well educated embracing gender mainstreaming with the same degree of enthusiasm or comprehension. Arguably a SWAp, as opposed to the project modality, is more empowering in this respect.

### *Interpretations of the gender approach*

As a further example of the dangers of over-simplification, during case study interviews and discussions, understandings and interpretations of the concept of gender underlying the programme varied considerably. Members of the DPEP bureau spoke confidently of the way in which DPEP was successful in terms of mainstreaming gender. However, the researchers gained a sense that what they were really speaking about was the fact that enrolment for girls was being prioritised in DPEP districts; mainstreamed in terms of increasing geographical coverage.

Within EdCil a more contrasting view was expressed that mainstreaming (in a more holistic sense than that alluded to immediately above) was never an overt objective of DPEP: that this would not be achievable, although in the early days EdCil technical support had tried to address gender management issues. The current focus on girls' enrolment is a practical response to the scale of the problem facing DPEP. More recently, there has begun a shift to focus more on classroom processes and the differential treatment of boys and girls and other social groups within the classroom.

### *SWAp Implications*

The sector-wide approach may be seen as an approach for ensuring that donor concerns, including gender, are put and kept firmly on the sectoral agenda. This may well be the case; but there is a danger in the concept being perceived as part of an external agenda that it will be used glibly. The crucial role those at “the Centre” have to play as an “interface” has been noted above. But the SWAp needs to go further than this. Policy commitment must also link with needs expressed from the grassroots. What the SWAp can do is build an environment where gender concerns, as expressed, can be responded to. It must avoid dictating a concept that is not owned, and therefore not prioritised by those responsible at all levels of the SWAp process.

This raises important issues for the way in which donors themselves approach gender. One commentator noted that the artificial sectoral separation by donors of e.g. gender participation militates against a mainstreamed approach. Indeed, analysis of the JRM materials reveals an approach to gender that could not be called “mainstreamed” in the fullest sense of the word.

Another issue, which study of DPEP has helped to bring to the fore, is that many gender issues within the education system may not be covered by the SWAp, or only minimally or indirectly. Particularly evident in the case of DPEP, for example, are the phenomena of child labour and HIV/AIDs. Moreover, the private education sector is growing in significance in India. Associated with this development are many gender issues, which DPEP is not empowered to confront.

## **Financial**

Throughout the DPEP Guidelines a commitment to promoting the education of girls permeates. This includes the kinds of initiatives DPEP will support: such as provision of free textbooks to girls in project districts in states which do not have such a scheme, and Early Childhood Education Centres in villages not eligible to be covered by a somewhat similar Integrated Child Development Scheme (part of the rationale for

these being the release of older girls from sibling care – freeing them to attend school). Further examples of the way DPEP Guidelines have promoted an emphasis on gender are detailed in Section 3 above. However, as far as the detail of financial parameters themselves are concerned (DPEP Guidelines, Chapter 2), while a commitment to girls' education is made in general terms, specific financial parameters are not prescribed, either in terms of an overall percentage of the programme to be spent on girls education, or in terms of specific elements – whether these be initiatives targeted at girls expressly or as gender disaggregated expenditure in components such as teacher training, community mobilisation, learning materials development, and so on.

However, as far as it has been possible to ascertain, during case study interviews, there does appear to have been an actual systematic attempt to appraise district plans and monitor implementation progress, with specific reference to gender finance. This includes paying particular attention to gender specific financial planning and the extent to which allocations are being dispersed.

As far as observable patterns in actual practice are concerned, anecdotal evidence from interview sources points to large variations between states on the costs that are allocated to gender or gender disaggregated activities within budgets. Moreover, where under spending occurs this tends to be associated with staff being over-stretched and a lack of *capacity to spend on gender*. It is also important to point out that the problem of inability to spend is a phenomenon that is not confined to gender components. Some states and districts have found it just as difficult to spend the funds they have allocated to teacher training or textbook development, for instance, in their various annual workplans.

There are potential dangers and distortions of making programmes too finance driven. Certainly, DPEP recognises this, and there have been a number of fierce debates in Joint Review missions on this very issue. If success is measured, too simplistically, on amounts of funds dispersed, more emphasis tends to be placed on those activities in which it is easiest to move most money (for example infrastructure expenditure). The really significant interventions that can move gender agendas forward may not necessarily be high spending activities. Furthermore, the fact that money has been spent on an initiative does not necessarily mean the initiative has had the desired impact. Despite these caveats, on balance, the more that any budgeting and expenditure on any component can be gender disaggregated and monitored, the better. This should be an ideal to strive for actively. There would appear to be scope for DPEP to make significant early advances in this direction if the will is there to do so.

When SWAp and project modalities are compared, gender disaggregated budgeting and monitoring might initially seem no less feasible in either. But when it is recognised that the collection of gender disaggregated data is in large part dependent on the design and output of management information systems for the sector as a whole, and when, as DPEP shows, central commitment needs to be supported by capacity building at the local level, the sector wide approach would appear to have significantly more scope to approach this holistically and coherently, as well as leverage for change.

## **Information and research**

### *Baseline beneficiary studies*

It was noted above that gender studies were used as an important mechanism to help formulate appropriate gender strategies. These studies were conducted to investigate reasons underlying the differences in girls' enrolment and retention, and gender inequity in education more generally. Both "supply" and "demand" factors were identified. An attempt is made to summarise these in the following table.

<b>Key Gender Issues identified in initial DPEP Gender Studies</b>	
<b>“Supply” Factors</b>	<b>“Demand” Factors</b>
• Physically inaccessible schools	• low parental value of girls’ education linked to low status of women
• inflexible school timings	• girls required for sibling care and other tasks
• paucity of female teachers	• perceived high costs of education, especially for girls
• inadequate infrastructure (e.g. girls toilets)	• social concerns regarding girls’ safety (e.g. travelling to school)
• irrelevance of curriculum	• early marriage
• inadequate teaching	•
• gender biases among teachers and administrators	•
• gender biases in teaching/learning materials	•
<i>Abstracted from: World Bank, November 1994, Staff Appraisal Report, India DPEP, Annexes 4 10.</i>	

DPEP has made a concerted effort to address both demand and supply side issues, including those which are not directly educational – for example through experimenting with escorts for girls travelling to school. It is in this area that DPEP has the potential to catalyse important changes, as long as these indirect constraints are kept high on the agenda.

### *Gender disaggregated EMIS*

DPEP has made a substantial impact upon the strengthening of educational management information systems. This is in respect of both the way information is gathered and the way it is used. However, there is still a very long way to go. The system still does not capture meaningful attendance data, for example. DPEP has also not really confronted the difficult issue of the accuracy of data collected and the vested interests in distorting these data. During case study interviews one donor commented on the lack of good quality gender disaggregated data within the overall data set. However, there is little doubt that there is far greater scope in SWAs to confront some of the more difficult issues associated with data quality than there is in project mode. Furthermore, under DPEP, some innovative new monitoring initiatives have been set up. One such interesting example is self-monitoring schools in Uttar Pradesh. Among other things, this also demonstrates that SWAs by virtue of their macro nature need not preclude innovation or small scale-experiment.

### *Regular systematic review of gender issues/performance (e.g. JRMs)*

As has already been touched upon, one of the distinctive features of DPEP is the Joint Review Mission process. Generally, JRMs appear to be performing their intended function well. Among other things, they are a good example of the kind of government/donor collaboration that the SWAp approach demands. JRMs are playing an important role in helping to gauge implementation progress. Perhaps less well recognised, but no less important, they are helping to introduce and reinforce a management culture that is timebound and target driven. Great weight is attached to the recommendations JRMs make. JRM recommendations are almost invariably executed in time for the next mission to review. This point is all the more significant when it realised that the effective supervision and inspection of district educational institutions, schools and teachers is otherwise almost entirely lacking in the system as a whole. JRMs do, in fact, provide the basis for a potentially sustainable model to promote increased accountability and effectiveness: one that is not too far removed from the OfSTED approach to inspection now prevalent in the United Kingdom, for example.

With regard to their approach to gender specifically, it is probably fair to conclude that JRMs are not uniform in their approach. This to some extent reflects a lack of consistency on the part of changing individual participants. Furthermore, JRMs are often necessarily selective: they tend to look in greater detail, and more frequently, at aspects of the programme causing most concern at the time. On the one hand

it might be considered good that gender issues have not had to be put too frequently on the high priority list. Another interpretation, however, not necessarily applicable to DPEP, is that gender issues can easily fall off the agenda if they are not appropriately and systematically prioritised.

### *Investigations into causes of gender inequity (workshops, research studies)*

DPEP has been heavily researched, including gender issues. But as one critic informed the research team, little of this research has so far resulted in concrete action in terms of improvements in gender relations on the ground. It is acknowledged that this, of course, takes time. Moreover, translating research findings/recommendations into changes to policy and practice is notoriously difficult, even in the developed world. But this does beg the more general question: can a SWAp be responsive to the results of such research, listen to its critics and translate into policy level improvements? As a model, on balance, a SWAp would seem to have the potential to create a number of opportunities over and above those enjoyed by projects. But such opportunities will probably not just happen of their own accord. It would be better to build them systematically into SWAp design.

## **Implementation/process**

### *"Awareness" campaigns: posters, village theatre, etc*

One researcher commented that DPEP is characterised by sloganeering, however, it is not clear how effective these campaigns have been in gender terms. It may be suggested however that one of the strengths of the SWAp would be the potential to mobilise national campaigns.

### *Teacher training addressing gender and gender sensitisation, etc.*

All teacher training programmes under DPEP must include a gender training component. This has had mixed results, since the actual content and organisation of teacher training is state-specific.

The EdCil gender consultant recognises that gender training has not always been considered relevant by trainees, and therefore has had varied success. She noted that Gender training has, in general, been far more effective in those states where teacher training started with a more general focus on contextualising the school and learning environment, and the place of gender issues within it. Where pedagogical issues have been addressed first, gender training is simply an 'add-on', it has been less well received and understood. Critics have supported this, saying that although the content of gender training is state specific, the *concept* is generic.

Thus while the SWAp can make gender training for teachers compulsory, its relevance to local environment depends largely on the availability and motivation of staff with local knowledge and an acceptance of its importance by teachers and trainers alike.

### *More female teachers*

One of the aims of DPEP has been to redress the male-female balance in the teaching profession - at present only about 30% of teachers are female. However, recruiting female teachers in itself is not necessarily a move towards equality, and could even be the opposite, unless attention is also paid to 'levelling the playing field'. That is, poor women particularly must be given the support (where necessary) to overcome initial lower education levels relative to men, and recognition of the burden of domestic work that falls on women. This means the provision of gender-sensitive employment rights and conditions and adequate childcare provision. Again this seems to be an area where the SWAp has the potential to back up an equality strategy through legislation (if its implementation is monitored).

### *Alternative Schooling (AS) centres*

One of the strategies of DPEP to get girls into school is the establishment of alternative (non-formal) schooling centres. Critics have pointed out that a gendered understanding of NFE is essential. The problem is that it risks creating a 'two track' system, where boys (whose education is prioritised) are sent to formal schools, while girls are sent to non-formal schools. In comparison with formal schools, alternative schooling centres, generally speaking, tend to have fewer resources, are taken less seriously and offer a lower quality of education. Teaching staff (predominantly female) work for lower salaries, or even as volunteers, and have none of the rights accorded to their (mostly male) colleagues in the formal system.

This is not to say that alternative schooling centres are not in some cases being successful and have a useful role to play in terms of getting 'difficult' non-attenders into school: however it is clear that an awareness of the potential pitfalls, close monitoring and research is needed. Governments have been criticised for using NFE as a low-cost means of boosting enrolment figures, while paying little attention to quality and gender implications. However, it maybe that within a SWAp links can be better maintained between formal and non-formal sectors.

## **Policy and planning**

### *Prioritising target districts according to gender criteria (low female literacy levels)*

At the outset, as one of the key criteria for district selection, DPEP was targeted at educationally backward districts with female literacy below the national average. With DPEP now expanding to more and more districts - in some states, all districts - this criterion is no longer fully applicable in every case.

It should be borne in mind, however, that even districts with quite high average literacy rates contain pockets of disadvantage. However the DPEP approach shows the potential, within a SWAp, to target and prioritise the most disadvantaged areas.

### *State gender strategies a mandatory component of the planning process*

Within DPEP, State gender strategies must be developed and approved as part of the district planning and appraisal process. This means that a major responsibility for gender resides at state level.

However, as acknowledged by the DPEP Bureau, this is a particularly difficult environment in terms of mainstreaming gender concerns. This would suggest the danger of a mismatch between national and state level priorities - and the fact that while a SWAp may be able to put gender issues on the agenda, it also needs district/state level recognition of gender as a priority issue.

### *Village/school mapping, etc.*

Micro-planning initiatives, including village and school mapping, are regarded as one of the areas where DPEP is able to take account of gender concerns at the grass-roots level. However, researchers and practitioners raised problems with this approach. As has already been suggested in this section, gender capacity weakens in moving from national to local level. Secondly, the reservation of places for women on VECs/other local bodies does not necessarily ensure that they have a voice in such exercises; and thirdly, where school and village mapping are conducted in a gender-blind fashion, there is a danger that they may in fact be reinforcing existing inequalities.

## Resources and infrastructure

### *Development of Gender Sensitive learning materials (checklists)*

One of the issues that has been enthusiastically tackled within DPEP is the re-writing of textbooks and other learning materials, paying attention to ironing out gender, caste and other forms of social bias. While this is to be applauded and is certainly an important step, some commentators expressed the opinion that this has been addressed because it is the *easy* part of tackling gender bias in the education system - it doesn't really involve the uneasy and potentially threatening task of tackling power relations between individuals and groups.

This does show, however, the potential for a SWAp to promote an overhaul of one part of the system - it is difficult to see how a project approach could have done so.

### *Improved school buildings with toilets for girls*

Research studies have established that one of the issues that militate against girls feeling comfortable in the school environment is the lack of adequate toilet facilities. DPEP has taken this on in terms of planning and building new schools. However, it has been noted that in some cases, new toilets are not being utilised because of inadequate local maintenance capacity and other factors.

Nevertheless, DPEP has been able to carry out groundbreaking work in terms of planning and building appropriate school buildings that make the most of their potential as learning environments. To what extent the school area is a gendered space that differentially influences the learning and development of girls and boys is an area for future development.

## Linkages

### *Proactive programme "convergence" with initiatives such as "Mahila Samakhya" (a "grass roots" women's' empowerment programme)*

Mahila Samakhya is a government programme for women's empowerment. In some states, Mahila Samakhya is incorporated within and funded through DPEP (e.g. Bihar), while in others it remains separate (Kerala, Gujarat). This would seem to be a positive and important link, given that it is contradictory to speak of gender mainstreaming *within* the education sector, unless it links to a wider mainstreaming agenda. However, some have expressed the opinion that linking with Mahila Samakhya enables planners to 'tick off' the gender element in DPEP; and that by subsuming Mahila Samakhya under an educational umbrella that it weakens the transformatory potential of Mahila Samakhya itself.

DPEP is also working with NGOs and other local-level organisations with progressive mainstreaming policies, e.g. Lok Jumbish in Rajasthan (see box below): a challenge is to learn from such progressive policies.

Some NGOs point to the difficulties of working with government, speaking of a 'culture clash'. Other NGOs point to a lack of co-operation, even if working on education within a DPEP district.

One commentator is of the opinion that because of the scale of the task facing DPEP, and the urgency in its implementation caused by UPE goals, that much of the pressure to deliver is pushed onto NGOs and VECs who don't have the capacity to deal with it.

There are obviously some inconsistencies in the ways in which DPEP is linking and working with NGOs and other programmes; in some cases co-operation has worked very well, in others less so. It seems that a great challenge for a SWAp in general must be to take seriously the issue of culture clash and how those linkages are going to work in practice.

The next section will consider the effectiveness of the approaches used above, both as defined by DPEP objectives, and in terms of a wider gender mainstreaming agenda.

### **Lok Jumbish, Rajasthan: Gender sensitivity in management**

Since its inception, gender sensitivity has been woven into the philosophy and structure of the organisation. This means:

- Creating circumstances in which women can be appointed in reasonable proportion
- Women should be able to work as equals and not have to conform to stereotyped expectations; and should have appropriate working conditions and facilities for safety and comfort.
- Women's role in the family and responsibilities of motherhood should be recognised. They should be able to work at a time and pace that accommodates this.
- Circumstances that isolate women should be addressed, and networks for women's empowerment within the organisation created
- Necessary steps should be taken to prevent sexual abuse and mental and other harassment
- Women must have a say in decision making, and not just decisions that directly affect only girls and women, but including e.g. policy and finance

*Adapted from Ramachandran, V (1998) 'Girls' and women's education: Policies and implementation mechanisms. Case study: India'. UNESCO*

## 5: Effectiveness of the Approaches Used to Date

This penultimate section aims to do two things: firstly, consider the effectiveness of approaches to gender mainstreaming in terms of DPEP's own objectives; secondly to draw lessons from the DPEP experience in terms of moving towards a gender mainstreamed SWAp, including in the wider international context.

Firstly, in terms of its own DPEP's own objectives, it is manifest that the programme is being successful in a number of key areas in terms of helping to initiate a process of change. It is contributing, for example, in a major way, to strengthening and developing decentralised institutional frameworks in support of educational reform. Especially significant is the "critical mass" of DPEP. Its geographical coverage currently extends to approximately 40 percent of the country. Thus, DPEP is exerting forces for change well beyond those that could ever have been achieved in project mode.

There is already empirical evidence emerging to confirm the extent to which DPEP has begun to achieve the extensive mobilisation of local communities for education. It has significantly increased enrolment, especially of girls. A study of the first four states to implement DPEP reports an incremental increase in enrolment, over and above the increase in non-DPEP districts, in the range of 4 to 17 percent. Of especial significance, girls account for 51.5 percent of the increase.

Information on learning achievement, retention and attendance rates is presently less robust and it is too early to draw conclusions with confidence, especially in relation to any reduction of gender disparities. It is thus not possible to extrapolate further and identify which particular interventions appear to be having most effect.

But what is already recognised within DPEP is that gender strategies that might work or be helpful in one situation may not be necessary or appropriate in another. The idea of setting up escort systems to accompany girls travelling to school is a good example in point. In some situations this appears to be proving a very appropriate response to strongly felt needs. In many other contexts similar socio-cultural conditions do not pertain to require such an intervention.

While gains have been made in terms of access of girls, this study has highlighted the fact that within DPEP gender is not mainstreamed in the broadest sense of the term, especially operationally: rather a strategic prioritisation of girls' education is in evidence. More comprehensive mainstreaming of gender within DPEP thus remains a future challenge. This is not to deny that DPEP is achieving some real successes in respect of reducing gender inequity. Moreover, there is much that is useful for learning and applying in the theoretical situation of design and implementation of a gender mainstreamed SWAp:

## 6: Lessons and Recommendations

### **SWAps can enable policy changes, unlikely to have been achievable in “project” mode.**

This was a widely held perception throughout case study interactions. What might simply have been “logframe assumptions” in project mode, DPEP has had the direct ability to address. Significant in this respect includes policy decisions affecting the establishment of village education committees and quotas for the representation of women; recruitment targets for female teachers; and the decision to employ all-female para-professional teachers; and review of textbooks and curricula to promote positive gender messages and images, thus avoiding marginalisation and stereotyping, etc. As noted above, SWAps also achieve “critical mass” as a force for change.

### **Vigilance to ensure that frameworks are gender sensitive**

DPEP shows that SWAps need not exhibit “Top Down” tendencies (a potential weakness identified in a SWOT analysis detailed in the *Inception Report, Annex 2*). The whole of DPEP implementation has been based on creating the capacity of districts to identify their own needs and priorities and develop their own, context specific, educational plans. DPEP is actively promoting innovation, variance, and cross state learning: with an emphasis on district-specific solutions to district-specific problems. DPEP also demonstrates that SWAps need not take on the characteristic of “macro instruments” in which it is difficult to develop “micro tools” (*Inception Report, Annex 2*).

A challenge for SWAps is to ensure that frameworks are designed to take account of local variation – the assumption is often made that policies and frameworks, such as ‘participation’, are gender neutral. In fact, women come to such a forum under different terms (defined by cultural norms of appropriate female behaviour) to men. An awareness of the gender implications of such frameworks, and support to counter any imbalances is an important SWAp issue.

### **SWAps need not be centralising**

The same SWOT analysis noted that “SWAps may be centralising, and lacking flexibility to local needs.” However, DPEP demonstrates that *appropriately* formulated SWAps *can* be strong mechanisms for the promotion of decentralising agendas. A main thrust of DPEP has involved decentralised capacity building including the transfer of many aspects of educational planning and management from the Centre to the States, and from State level to District level. An on-going challenge is to ensure that in the decentralising process, commitments to gender that are strong at national/policy level are operationalised at state/district/ground level.

### **Clear gender commitment in programme objectives**

A commitment to girls’ education appears as a strong thread throughout the original DPEP Guidelines, which clarified programme parameters and provided a rubric for the formulation of detailed plans. This commitment is translated into clear programme objectives. These have led to a continuous focus on girls’ education.

While it is noted that DPEP does not exhibit a fully mainstreamed approach, it can be concluded that a clear commitment in programme objectives is essential in order to maintain a focus on girls. But a lesson for future SWAps may be to ensure that a commitment contained in policy documents is specified as an objective to be monitored, to ensure that it is operationalised.

## Targeted interventions to ‘level the playing field’

Because of the huge gender disparities faced by DPEP, and the focus on girls’ education noted above, after 5 years of the programme, the most impressive gains are in terms of targeting: the enrolment of girls.

To level the playing field, women and girls may need support to overcome initial inequalities in their own education and the additional burden of unpaid domestic and community work and other demands. Targeted interventions (in parallel with mainstreaming) are important for the SWAp, for example:

- Provision for extra support and training for female teachers and gender-sensitive employment conditions, adequate childcare provision.
- Provision for extra support and training for female VEC members.

## Towards a ‘gender mainstreamed SWAp’

The DPEP Guidelines specify a holistic planning and management approach which ‘should incorporate a gender perspective in all aspects of the planning and implementation process’ (1.1.3.iv.b). Because of the enormous gender disparities in India, however, and the need to develop attitudinal changes more favourable to girls’ education, DPEP has worked by simultaneous implementation and ‘environment-building’. Environment building, that is mainstreaming cultural/attitudinal changes in gender terms, is a longer-term activity - the results may not be really visible for some time and will be difficult to quantify.

The challenge faced by SWApS more generally, therefore, is to maintain the long-term mainstreaming agenda in the face of more visible, shorter-term gains and retain awareness of the link between them. In particular, in terms of mainstreaming, this means:

- recognising girls’ education as an end in itself, linked to wider gender mainstreaming goals, as opposed to subsuming it under goals of access and achievement
- avoiding automatic linkage of girls to other categories of disadvantage - being a girl is not itself the problem – wider social relations and gendered power structures are
- where a strategic focus on girls education is adopted, maintaining a parallel broader focus on gender equity e.g. by setting of process indicators – i.e. a gradual, phased move from targeting to mainstreaming.

## Monitoring and review of gender focus

Thinking on gender and development is evolving fast with lessons from experience constantly leading to shifts in focus.

Since the SWAp implies a long-term commitment, adequate plans should be made to review and update gender objectives as necessary in the light of potential changes, particularly in terms of:

- developing an understanding of the complex interactions of gender with (in India) caste, class, age, ability etc
- developing an understanding of the specific problems that boys/men face within the sector and how these relate to the problems of girls/women: a holistic approach to gender

## Gender issues in areas beyond the focus of the SWAp

DPEP is a sector wide approach only in relation to Primary Grades 1 to 6 or 7. Parents’ and boys’ and girls’ aspirations are partially shaped, by actual and perceived opportunities ahead of children beyond the primary stage. For many girls especially, upper primary and secondary schooling opportunities do not exist, or socio-economic, cultural and other constraints to access may be prohibitive. Confronting these constraints, including in a co-ordinated way, was beyond the remit of DPEP in the sense that, as noted in Section 1, DPEP has not constituted a “full” SWAp.

There are also significant issues concerning gender mainstreaming in areas beyond the bounds of DPEP: e.g. private schooling where little is known about decisions made concerning whether boys/girls are sent to public/private schools.

The gender mainstreamed SWAp must take account of gender issues beyond the confines of the sector, as defined for the SWAp. It might also be concluded that, had DPEP been a “full” SWAp, it would have been easier to tackle some of these issues. This suggests that, in terms of gender mainstreaming, SWAps do have the potential to be an enhanced enabling model.

## **Making the most of institutional learning on gender issues**

GoI is planning to evolve from DPEP to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a wider sector approach than DPEP. A further challenge for SWAps is to ensure that there is continuity in policy making, by ensuring systems for institutional learning on gender issues and incorporating learning on gender mainstreaming from earlier programmes.

## **Donor Progress On Gender Mainstreaming**

Despite the fact that donors are committed to the gender mainstreaming agenda of DAC, it should not be assumed that gender issues are mainstreamed within donor institutions, policies and practice. On the whole, however, DPEP appears to be a good example of what can be possible in this respect, though it is noted that gender considerations have not featured especially prominently in recent JRM reports (perhaps because progress being made in respect of gender equity is considered satisfactory or good, and there are more pressing concerns). But it is perhaps reasonable to conclude that a gender mainstreamed SWAp requires vigilance from donors and governments to focus and monitor progress towards gender mainstreaming within their own institutions. This is particularly relevant in terms of examining implications for gender of current sectoral divisions and strongly defended boundaries.

## **Vigilance on policy evaporation (gender ‘fadeaway’)**

Gender commitments have a tendency to weaken from original policy formulation both through time, and in moving away from the centre to district-level. The challenge for a SWAp is to ensure that structures are in place to prevent this.

## **Importance of dissemination of information on SWAps**

In certain quarters DPEP has been (unfairly) perceived as essentially a “World Bank” programme, leading to a degree of political contentiousness and negative press comment. This does point up the significance of communications issues for SWAps more generally. There is a challenge to ensure that the true nature of the SWAp is widely understood and that documents and learning are readily available. Among DPEP responses, awareness campaigns have played a major role, as has a regular DPEP dissemination magazine *DPEP Calling*. A wide range of research reports documenting DPEP progress has been produced. GoI has also been active in posting information about DPEP on its web site, a key means of effective access to, and dissemination of, relevant knowledge and experience

## **Rights perspective**

National and international legal frameworks also change, such as the post-Beijing platform for action, relevant for DPEP. One of the strengths of the SWAp approach in gender terms would seem to be the ability to ensure that legal commitments on gender (e.g. from Beijing) are incorporated and honoured.

## **Gender-sensitive budgets**

Although DPEP has specific amounts budgeted for girls’ education, other gender disaggregated commitments within e.g. teacher training, and learning materials are not specified. This points to a wider

SWAp challenge to ensure that attempts to mainstream gender are accompanied by mainstreaming of budgetary commitments: that is to say, specified amounts throughout the programme are committed to gender. Furthermore, measurement and monitoring mechanisms have an important role to play in ensuring that such allocations are successfully utilised.

### **Gender capacity building for NGOs**

For future SWAps it may well be desirable or necessary to build in safeguards/mechanisms that create the enabling conditions for the full potential of NGOs and alternative schooling approaches (where appropriate) to be maximised. The point is especially critical for gender mainstreaming, not least that alternative schooling/NGO programmes often target the out of school population – “the unreached” – where girls may well be a majority. At the same time, setting up alternative systems and educational routes can be problematic – especially if they develop a stigma or status (deserved or undeserved) as a second class/inferior alternative to the mainstream, and even more so if this became a major domain for the education of children of one gender.

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## Annex 2: Key individuals consulted

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