

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a success: IIM study

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NEW DELHI: There are some good tidings for the Union Human Resource Development Ministry from its flagship enterprise, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), to universalise elementary education.

A study, conducted by the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A), has found that the SSA has met with considerable success quantitatively if not qualitatively.

While quality remains an area of concern, the SSA has been able to bridge the enrolment, retention and achievement gaps between the sexes and among social groups. According to the IIM-A study, titled 'Shiksha Sangam: Innovations under the SSA', the out-of-school population had come down from 28.5 per cent of the six-to-14 year age group in 2001 to 6.94 per cent by the end of 2005. Drop-out rates at the primary level stands at about 12 per cent and 190 of the 400 districts were showing a declining trend in 2005-2006.

The SSA has been able to

bring Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs) — weak points in earlier efforts to universalise elementary education — into the educational mainstream.

Greater share

The share of SC/ST children at the primary level in 2004-2005 was actually greater than their respective proportion of the population: 20.73 per cent in the case of SCs against a population share of 16.2 per cent and 10.69 per cent against a population share of 8.2 per cent. The gender gap, in enrolment now stands at 4.2 percentage points at the primary level and 8.8 percentage points at the upper primary level. In 2005-2006, there were only 22 districts (of the 400 for which data was available) where the gender gap was more than 10 percentage points at the primary level.

However, the success rate on this count in the upper primary level is not so good as 82 districts have reported a gap of more than 15 percentage points.