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Government Schemes to Reduce School Dropout Rates in India: PM POSHAN, Samagra Shiksha, KGBV, RTE, NMMSS and Facts

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School dropout - children leaving school before completing a stage - remains a challenge in India, especially at the secondary level, where the dropout rate was about 12.6 per cent in 2021-22 according to UDISE+, against about 3 per cent at the upper-primary and 1.5 per cent at the primary level. The Centre and states use a mix of meals, free and compulsory education, residential schools for girls, scholarships and incentives to keep children in school; the National Education Policy 2020 sets the target of 100 per cent gross enrolment from pre-school to secondary level by 2030.

Why Children Drop Out

- Poverty and child labour, distance to secondary schools, early marriage of girls, lack of toilets and safety, poor learning levels, and migration of families.
- Dropout rises sharply after Class 8, when schooling is no longer free and compulsory under the RTE Act.

Major Central Schemes

- **PM POSHAN (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman), Ministry of Education:** the Mid-Day Meal Scheme of 1995 (National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education), renamed and expanded in September 2021 to cover Bal Vatika (pre-primary) to Class 8 in government and aided schools; hot cooked meals raise enrolment, attendance and retention.
- **Samagra Shiksha (2018), Ministry of Education:** the integrated scheme for school education from pre-school to Class 12, formed by merging Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (2009) and Teacher Education; funds infrastructure, teacher training, free textbooks and uniforms, transport and bridge courses for out-of-school children.
- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), 2004:** residential schools for girls from SC, ST, OBC, minority and BPL families in educationally backward blocks, now extended up to Class 12 under Samagra Shiksha.
- **National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE), 2008:** Rs 3,000 fixed deposit for SC/ST girls and all girls passing Class 8 from KGBVs who enrol in Class 9, payable on reaching 18 and passing Class 10.
- **National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS), 2008:** one lakh scholarships of Rs 12,000 a year for meritorious students from families with income up to Rs 3.5 lakh, to continue from Class 9 to Class 12.
- **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009:** in force from 1 April 2010 under Article 21A (86th Amendment, 2002); free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14, 25 per cent seats for disadvantaged children in private schools, no detention till Class 8 (states may now detain in Classes 5 and 8 after the 2019 amendment).
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (22 January 2015, Panipat):** joint initiative of the Ministries of Women and

Child Development, Education, and Health, for the survival, protection and education of the girl child.

- **ULLAS – New India Literacy Programme (2022):** adult and community literacy scheme that replaced Saakshar Bharat (2009), so that literate parents value schooling.
- **PM SHRI Schools (2022):** more than 14,000 exemplar schools upgraded as models of NEP 2020.

State Initiatives

- Free bicycles and uniforms for girls (Bihar, West Bengal's Sabooj Sathi, Odisha), conditional cash transfers such as West Bengal's Kanyashree, and residential hostels for tribal children.

Important Facts for Exams

- Mid-Day Meal: **1995**, renamed **PM POSHAN in 2021**; Samagra Shiksha: **2018** (merged SSA 2001 and RMSA 2009); KGBV: **2004**.
- NSIGSE: 2008, Rs 3,000 deposit; NMMSS: 2008, Rs 12,000 a year, one lakh scholarships.
- RTE Act: 2009, effective 1 April 2010, ages 6-14, Article 21A.
- Secondary dropout rate about 12.6 per cent (UDISE+ 2021-22); NEP 2020 target: 100 per cent GER by 2030.

FAQs

Which scheme has done the most to raise enrolment?

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme (now PM POSHAN) is credited with the biggest gains in enrolment and attendance at the elementary level, with the RTE Act making elementary education a right.

Why does dropout rise after Class 8?

Free and compulsory education under the RTE Act ends at 14 years; secondary schools are fewer and farther, and the opportunity cost of schooling rises for poor families.

Why is this topic asked in exams?

Education schemes, their launch years and nodal ministries are common in the social issues and government schemes sections of RBI, NABARD and SSC exams.

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