



A Tale of Two Schools: Untying the Tied-Grants in SSA

This proposed allocation for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for 2011-12 is Rs.21,000 crore. SSA norms dictates that these allocations come to the schools as tied funds meant only to be used for specific purposes. With different schools have different needs, is this the most effective way for money to be allocated and spent? This story highlights the problem with the current system of tied grants.

This is a story of two schools in Nalanda district in Bihar. “Maghra” is an Upper Primary school and “Kharjama” which is a New Primary School in Biharshariff block close to the district headquarter. They are located on two sides of a district road, at a distance of less than 2 kms from each other.



The school characteristics, however, are completely different:

- Maghra is surrounded by a semi-rural habitation, whereas “Kharjama” is surrounded by fields and farms and is completely rural.

- Maghra was founded in 1939, it has been in operation before India became independent. Kharjama was constructed in 2007, it was established by funds coming through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.
- Maghra has 1401 students from Class I to Class VIII, 16 classrooms rooms and 19 teachers. Kharjama has 108 students, 3 classrooms and 2 teachers.
- The teaching staff in Maghra are experienced, some with 20-30 years of teaching in the same school. The two teachers appointed after Kharjama was constructed have less than two years of teaching experience.
- Maghra has a mix of old and new classrooms – 4 new rooms were constructed with SSA funds, some repair work done on the roof and floor of the old classrooms, toilets were constructed and some extra contract teachers were appointed. Kharjama has an excellent building, but without any boundary wall or gate. Toilets were being constructed at the time of the survey. It does not have the feel of a school as yet.
- The Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti (VSS)¹ in Maghra is very active. They interact regularly with the teachers, knows what grants the school should get and how they can be spent. They even collect contributions from the parents to supplement grants that come from the government. The case of the VSS in Kharjama is exactly the opposite – the VSS secretary had no idea what his roles and responsibilities were.



UPS "MAGHRA"



NPS "KHARJAMA"

¹ At the time of the survey, the schools had functioning Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti-s (VSS), which have been replaced by Tadarth (Ad-hoc) Samiti-s at present. However, under the Right to Education Act (2009), all schools will be required to have a School Management Committee (SMC) which will replace the previous VSS and have the power given to them under the State rules of the RTE Act.

Interviews conducted in both the schools bring out the obvious fact – their needs are very different. Maghra needs more funds for school maintenance, to buy stationary and teaching aids like chalk, duster and blackboards, a school library and construction of more toilets (especially girl’s toilet). They also needed a full-time administrative staff since it also houses the Cluster Resource Centre and various extracurricular activities of the block. Kharjama needed more teachers, funds for constructing boundary wall and kitchen shed, and teacher training.

The SSA norms, however, does not allow for such flexibility. Using these norms, let us look at what each school actually gets:

Grants Received	SSA Norms	Maghara Upper primary : Std 1 to 8	Kharjama New primary: Std 1 to 5
School Maintenance Grant	More than 3 classrooms:10000; otherwise 5000	15000	5000
School Development Grant	Upper Primary: 7000 Primary: 5000	12000	5000
TLM grant to teachers	500 per teacher	9500	1000
Total		36500	11000
Grants per student		26	101
Grants per student (without TLM)		19	93
Per Child Grant Ratio		With Teacher Grant	1: 4
		Without Teacher Grant	1: 5

The norm-based approach that is followed in devolving grants to schools results in this anomaly in terms of how much money actually comes in order to make the school function properly. As per the norms, Maghra gets only three times the total grants that Kharjama gets, although Maghra has 10 times the student strength of Kharjama.

The other important point to note is that Maghra has an old school building and a large area – therefore, maintenance and repair costs will be much higher than Kharjama. Even if the teachers in Maghra wanted to use part of the TLM grant for maintenance, the guidelines for expenditure do not allow them to do so.

Points to consider:

- Given the nature of the two schools, is the money sufficient for running the school? What can be done to provide better facilities given the existing schemes - both SSA and State government?
- How can SMCs function more effectively in making school development plans, monitoring fund utilization and improve learning levels of children under the RTE Act (2009)?

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