HYPOTHESIS

Rajasthan is characterised by sharp differences in terms of terrain, livelihood, dispersed patterns of settlement and social identity. Within the state, agriculture and animal husbandry are the major sources of livelihood, with no significant manufacturing industries or sectors. Distribution of income and assets is also highly uneven. Therefore, the task of ensuring that education is universalised and relevant for all sections of society is indeed formidable.

The main challenge confronting education strategies in Rajasthan is the education of the girl child, especially among Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.

Our analysis of primary education in Rajasthan attempts to identify key issues to strengthen initiatives for universalising literacy and ensuring quality education that could sustain a pro-poor pattern of growth. The main points raised in this chapter are:

- The system of education in Rajasthan needs considerable reform in order to improve the access of marginalised groups (women especially girl children, dalits, migrants and nomadic people, etc.) to the educational infrastructure that has been put in place. Education reforms must make the system more relevant to the livelihood needs of people, and should enable them to exercise greater control over their lives.

- Decentralisation and people’s participation is a must for the success of education interventions in Rajasthan, given the persistence of low achievements in education in spite of considerable investment in the expansion of education infrastructure. Participation should imply involvement of people and the government together in deciding the direction of and control over programmes.
• Rajasthan is at the crossroads as far as design and implementation of education interventions are concerned, with substantial resources flowing to the sector, both from the state’s budget and internationally assisted programmes such as DPEP. However, situational analysis indicates that the literacy situation in Rajasthan is quite grim, with many districts being among the most backward in the country in terms of literacy rates, and even more so in terms of female literacy.

• Learning from success stories and examples of best practice is a necessary component of a successful education strategy. Rajasthan has long been the crucible of experimentation with regard to school education. The lessons from programmes such as Non Formal Education, Shiksha Karmi, Lok Jumbish, etc., must be incorporated into the future education strategy of the state.