

# Consultations and Network Building on Classroom Curriculum, Pluralism and Social Inclusion: Voices from the Margin

## Background

The project on “Classroom Curriculum, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Voices from the Margins” was implemented during 2008-10 by Deshkal Society with support from and in collaboration with UNICEF, India. The project involved dialogue generation and network building with various stakeholders in the elementary education sector through organizing regional consultations in the following seven states:

- Jharkhand
- Uttar Pradesh
- Orissa
- Assam
- Rajasthan
- Tamil Nadu
- Maharashtra

In the process of implementation of the project, Deshkal Society was able to develop network partnership with CSOs in three other states too, namely West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar. The project culminated in a National Consultation on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Practices and Policies at New Delhi on September 7-8, 2010.



This project and the national consultation were part of, and organically linked to the processes initiated through an international conference on School Education, Pluralism and Marginality: Comparative Perspectives organised by Deshkal Society in New Delhi in December 2007 in collaboration with UNICEF. Since then, Deshkal Society has consistently taken initiatives and made persistent efforts towards dialogue generation, development and promotion of the agenda in collaboration with regional partners and multiple stakeholders in education. This has been extended to the national level with the support from national and international level organizations.

## Key Outputs

- Dialogue generation and network-building among the key stakeholders in elementary education: About 700 people and 100 organizations participated in the processes of dialogue generation through state consultations. The participants included representatives from the multiple stakeholders in the education sector, such as civil society organizations, state councils of educational research and training (SCERTs), teacher training institutes, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), schoolteachers, teacher educators, textbook writers and reviewers, education experts, researchers, documentary filmmakers, journalists and members of the local intelligentsia.
- Engagements in the public domain: A vibrant e-group discussion forum called Deshkal for Inclusive Classrooms was formed to share learning and experiences and to promote discussion and dialogue among key stakeholders in the education sector. The e-group currently has over 400 members from the different regions of the country and across the world.
- Publication of a National Report on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices: The report has sought to explore, identify and discuss key issues and challenges in elementary education in India, and suggest inputs that need to be addressed by policymakers and practitioners to promote inclusive classrooms, ensure meaningful and successful school participation of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and enhance their learning achievements. The report identifies the following key areas that need to be focused on by policymakers and practitioners.



- Recognizing social diversity within classrooms
- Developing socio-economic profiles of diverse learners
- Developing contextualised inclusive teaching-learning practices and processes
- Regular evaluation and feedback on the impact of teaching-learning practices
- A greater focus on diversity issues in teacher education and training programmes
- Promoting diversity in the elementary teaching workforce
- Developing an organic school-community relationship

