



EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT!

#ACTNOW

A study report on the state of school infrastructure in Odisha



I. Background

The quality of school infrastructure plays a vital role in shaping students' learning process. Extensive research has consistently shown that well-built facilities, including classrooms, toilets, drinking water facilities, and the availability of competent teachers, significantly contribute to enhanced instruction, improved student outcomes, and reduced dropout rates (1).

Section 19 and the Schedule of the Right to Free & Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, also mandates that all schools had to comply with several infrastructure provision norms, teacher-pupil ratios, and other requirements.

In July 2021, the Odisha government took a noteworthy step by approving a substantial amount of Rs. 95 crores to develop school infrastructure in the state (2).

However, recent revelations made by the Odisha government themselves acknowledge the persistent lack of adequate infrastructure in numerous schools across the state.

During a session in March of this year, Mr Samir Ranjan Das, the School and Mass Education Minister, revealed that 11710 schools do not have access to electricity.

In this context, Atmashakti Trust in collaboration with Odisha Shramajeebee Mancha (OSM) and Mahila Shramajeebee Mancha, Odisha (MSMO), two state-level people's collectives of Odisha, conducted a study to assess the status of school infrastructure in government elementary schools with a view to highlight the issue and draw the government's attention on it for immediate redressal.

II. About Us

Founded in 1995, Atmashakti is a right-based catalyst organization that coalesces marginalized communities for socio-economic and political empowerment. Its work is spread across Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand, covering over 12000 villages from underprivileged communities.

Atmashakti currently serves over one million families and plans to reach eight million by expanding its work in these states to cover 10% of poor rural families in India.

OSM and MSMO are state-level people's collectives that have been operating since 2009 in the Urban Local Body (ULB) of Bhubaneswar and 97 remote blocks in the state of Odisha, India. These areas are predominantly inhabited by tribal communities, Dalits (formerly known as untouchables), and other marginalized groups. These collective work to empower these marginalized communities and enable them to assert their rights, access essential services, and ascertain their socio-economic and political empowerment.

III. Methodology

The study encompassed a comprehensive analysis of 7,146 schools from 98 blocks and 1 Urban Local Body (Bhubaneswar) of 17 districts (Khordha, Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Nayagarh, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Gajapati, Boudh, Nabarangpur, and Deogarh) in the state.

The study was conducted between April 2023 to Mid-May 2023 by more than 350 team members of the collectives. They collected primary data from these schools/villages, which were subsequently harvested into google forms for collation, interpretation, and analysis. The sampling was done randomly among the villagers available for interviews through our self-administered questionnaire. To access the questionnaire, please use this link: <https://bit.ly/3mJVUQs>

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- (1): <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/why-education-infrastructure-matters-learning>
 - (2): <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/odisha-govt-approves-rs-95-crore-for-school-infra-development/articleshow/84576570.cms>
 - (3): <https://enewsinsight.com/odisha-govt-admits-lack-of-infrastructure-in-huge-number-of-schools/>

IV. Action initiated

The study's findings were compiled into a report and submitted to the respective authorities in 98 blocks and 1 Urban Local Body (Bhubaneswar) of 17 districts in May 2023. The main objective of the report was to draw attention to the non-compliance with RTE norms and emphasise the pressing need for repairing and constructing school infrastructure.

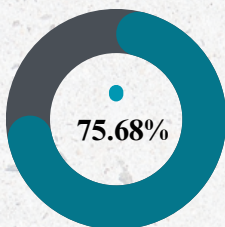
In order to raise awareness among the general public about this issue, members of these collectives also organized rallies in several blocks.

Additionally, a state-level media advocacy campaign was launched to highlight the issue and draw the attention of responsible authorities and policymakers. The aim of this campaign was to prioritize efforts to address the recommendations mentioned in the report and take necessary actions accordingly.

IV. Key Facts (Study Findings)

The study examined 7,146 schools across 98 blocks and 1 Urban Local Body (Bhubaneswar) in 17 districts. The findings reveal a concerning lack of adherence to the guidelines outlined in the Right to Education (RTE) Act, indicating a significant non-compliance.

Quality of school infrastructure



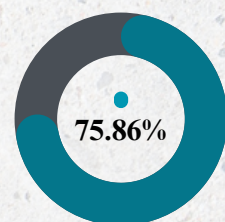
of schools (5408) require minor or major repairs, failing to meet the norms and standards outlined in the Right to Education (RTE) Act.

School Repairs: Around **75.68%** of schools (5408) require minor or major repairs, failing to meet the norms and standards outlined in the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Out of the 30 schools surveyed in Jharsuguda district, **93.33%** of schools require immediate repair which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed districts.



Drinking Water Facilities: In **12.60%** of surveyed schools (1882), either drinking water facilities are lacking or fully damaged. In addition to that, there are **14.26%** schools where water facility structures are partly damaged requiring immediate repair. Out of the 1127 schools surveyed in Rayagada district, **23.33%** of schools require immediate repair which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed districts.

Playground: Approximately **75.86%** of elementary schools in Odisha (5421 schools) lack a playground, depriving students of physical activity opportunities. Out of the 1127 schools surveyed in Rayagada district, **92.10%** of schools do not have playgrounds which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed districts.

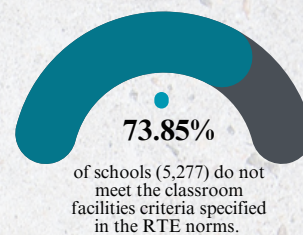


of elementary schools in Odisha (5421 schools) lack a playground.



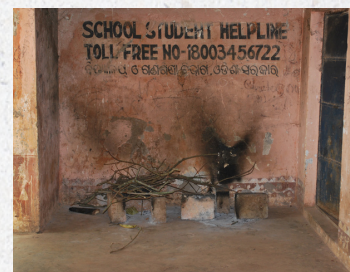


Classroom Facilities: A total of **73.85%** of schools (5,277) do not meet the classroom facilities criteria specified in the RTE norms. Out of the 1127 schools surveyed in Rayagada district, **92.10%** of schools failed to comply with the norms which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed district



Kitchen Space: Approximately **13.35%** of schools (954) either do not have a kitchen space or the structure has been fully damaged. From the balance 6192 schools, 20.77% of them have partially damaged, hindering the provision of nutritious meals to students.

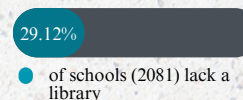
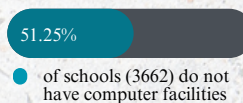
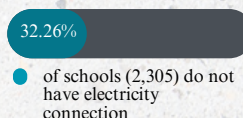
Out of the 49 schools surveyed in Deogarh district, **34.69%** of schools run with non-availability of proper kitchen space which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed districts.



Toilets: About **25.45%** of schools (1819) either lack toilets, or the toilets are fully damaged. From the balance 5327 schools, toilets are partially damaged in **35.96%** schools. Out of the 49 schools surveyed in Deogarh district, **63.27%** of schools run with limited or no access to toilets which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed districts.

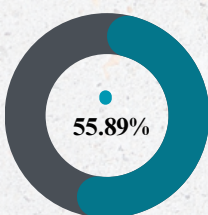
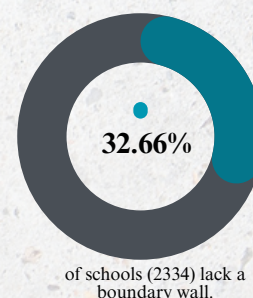


Electricity, Computer and Library Facilities: **32.26%** of schools (2,305) do not have electricity connection, hindering the use of technology for effective teaching methods. Additionally, **51.25%** of schools (3662) do not have computer facilities and **29.12%** of schools (2081) lack a library. Nayagarh district had the highest percentage of schools without electricity (**69.37%**) out of the 111 schools surveyed.



Malkangiri district had the highest percentage of schools without computers (73.61%) out of the 811 schools surveyed. Rayagada district had the highest percentage of schools without a library (**53.33%**) out of the 1127 schools surveyed. These findings emphasize the urgent need for addressing infrastructure and resource gaps in these districts to ensure quality education for students.

Boundary Walls: **32.66%** of schools (2334) lack a boundary wall, compromising security and safety on school premises. Out of the 111 schools surveyed in Nayagarh district, **61.47%** of schools run without a boundary wall which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed districts.



Teacher Shortage: Approximately **55.89%** of schools (3,994) surveyed do not have the required number of teachers as per the mandated Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) norms in the RTE Act. Out of the 376 schools surveyed in Nayagarh district, **90.69%** of schools failed to meet the PTR norms which is the highest percentage of schools among surveyed districts.

To know the consolidated and district-wise study findings, please [Click here](#).

V.Recommendations

a) Broad recommendations

Based on extensive discussions with key stakeholders, the following recommendations have emerged to address the current challenges in school infrastructure:

- **Infrastructure Requirements:** It is crucial to fulfill infrastructural needs in schools according to the guidelines outlined in the RTE Act. This includes ensuring an adequate number of classrooms, boundary walls for security, access to clean water, separate toilets for boys and girls, functional kitchens for providing nutritious meals, playgrounds for physical activity, ramps for accessibility, electrification, and timely teacher appointments.
- **Transparency Board:** Establishing a visible board in schools to display information regarding compliance with RTE norms can promote transparency.
- **Community-Driven Social Audit:** Conducting social audits involving the community can help assess the implementation of RTE norms, including infrastructure and educational standards.
- **Teacher Focus:** Recruiting teachers in schools and minimizing non-teaching responsibilities can improve their focus on effective teaching and student engagement. By reducing administrative tasks and other non-academic duties, teachers can dedicate more time to planning engaging lessons and providing personalized attention to students, leading to better learning outcomes.
- **Adequate Funds:** Providing sufficient funds at the panchayat/ward level is essential to avoid delays in school infrastructure construction and repair. Ensuring that allocated funds are readily available and effectively utilized can contribute to timely improvements in school infrastructure.
- **Empower local self-governance:** Involve Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) in all actions implemented as recommended since their proactive engagement is crucial for the success of various school programs.

b) Specific recommendations to implement in priority basis

First priority:

- Develop a detailed action plan based on the assessment findings, considering budget allocation and coordination with relevant departments.
- Initiate immediate remedial actions to address critical infrastructure deficiencies, such as repairing damaged structures, constructing new toilets, and ensuring access to clean drinking water.
- Recruit teachers in school to fill gaps as per Pupil-Teacher-Ratio (PTR) norms in the RTE Act.

Second Priority:

- Continue addressing immediate remedial actions for critical infrastructure deficiencies such as toilets, kitchen space, drinking water facilities, repair work, etc.
- Focus on basic infrastructure upgrades by constructing additional classrooms and improving existing facilities.
- Allocate resources for technology integration, providing computer labs, and necessary digital resources.

Third Priority:

- Complete basic infrastructure upgrades for all targeted schools.
- Ensure playground and boundary wall in all targeted schools .
- Allocate resources for continuous improvements and address any remaining infrastructure gaps.

These recommendations will help improve school infrastructure and ensure compliance with RTE standards, promoting a conducive learning environment as well as quality education for students.

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