

Kerala launches mobile app to find how many rural children attend school



Android-based app will form the core of a village-level survey

Preparing village education register on children's education in the State is no easy task. What will make the job of the enumerators easier is a mobile app developed by the management information system (MIS) team of the Samagra Shiksha, Kerala.

After the Right to Education Act (RTE) came into effect, it was mandatory to collect details of all children of school-going age in a place to ensure that those in the 6 to 14 age group were getting free and universal education, Samagra Shiksha, Kerala, project director A.P. Kuttykrishnan said.

Rather than collect details of children studying in schools, the register preparation would involve gathering particulars of children of school-going age in all households. The survey would help bring all children to schools, making Kerala the first State to ensure this. Follow-ups on their education status too would become easier, Samagra officials said.

The Android-based app, whose name was yet to be finalised, would form the core of the door-to-door enumeration process, though a website too had been developed as an alternative, they said.

Over one crore households would be surveyed. While a large part of the survey would be done using the app, the offline format would be used in areas where a stable Internet connection was difficult to come by.

Keeping in mind the enormity of the task, Samagra Shiksha's MIS team developed the app that would display pre-fed data, courtesy integration of panchayats' database into the app. This would ensure that not every bit of information would have to be filled in.

Only if there were children in a would fields such as student's name, gender, UID number, date of birth, school, class, management, and reasons for remaining out of school become visible for filling in, they said. "The information will help determine if a child is going to school or not. The register has to be updated every year," Mr. Kuttykrishnan said.

Enumerators, including Samagra Shiksha teachers, people from the Local Self-government Department, and National Service Scheme students, would spend over 20 minutes in each house collecting details. Officials said focus would be on children with special needs, migrant children, and those living in tribal areas where the number of out-of-school children and dropouts were found to be higher. While attempts had been made in the past to survey the number of dropouts and out-of-school children at the local level, the results were not satisfactory. The campaign-mode survey would be an accurate record of the number of children in school, they said.

A trial would be held this month in Aynicode ward of Porur panchayat in Malappuram district to figure out any challenges in undertaking the survey and how to overcome these, Mr. Kuttykrishnan said.

The survey is expected to be completed by the end of the year.