

7) Nearly 10 years after the enactment of the RTE Act & 16 years after RTE was elevated to a fundamental right, still a large number of children are out of school. Examine the reasons & suggest measures to overcome such obstacles.

Education is a ladder facilitating social mobility for downtrodden. But right to education in India has become a ladder without steps due to prevailing socio-economic & cultural reasons —

- Lack of financial security: A large number of children who are out of school belong to financially less secured families.
- Law legalises Child labour: Though the 2016 act penalises child labour in factories, it is silent in family-run small businesses.
- Accessibility issues: Either the schools are located far from hinterlands or some part of India is under constant threat — i.e., Maoist areas.
- Cultural norms & values: It affects the girl children the most as they are forced to do only household tasks.
- Poor sanitation facilities: It is the major cause for high drop-outs from school of adolescent girls.
- Lack of differentiation of schools: Non-availability of special schools for Tribal children cuts them off from mainstream society.

Schemes like Mid-day meal is noble and should be complementary to alternatives such as —

- Providing clean sanitation facilities on top-priority.
- Providing reservation for women in more formal jobs so that young girls aspire to come out & educate themselves.
- Fixing minimum wage for both formal & informal jobs so that children are not pulled into child labour to supplement the family income.
- Empowering local bodies to operate schools on their own, thus encouraging co-operative sub-federalism, as drop-out rates ~~are~~ have regional variations & cannot be generalised.