

SABOOJ SATHI: Bi-cycle Distribution Scheme

About: Hon'ble Finance Minister, in the Budget speech of 2015-2016, announced the scheme for distribution of bi-cycles to estimated 40 lakh students of class IX to XII studying in Govt. run and Govt. aided Schools and Madrashes of the State. It was further announced that around 25 lakh students would be covered in 2015-16 thereafter 15 lakh in the next fiscal.

The scheme is now well-known as **"Sabooj Sathi"** as coined by Hon'ble Chief Minister herself and it reflects her ambition that bi-cycles provided under the scheme will empower the young students to achieve new feats in future. The insignia of the scheme is also drawn by her and is firmly attached on the front basket of the bi-cycles. Hon'ble CM flagged off distribution in September 2015 from Paschim Medinipur.

Objective: Empower the students, especially the girls and reduce drop outs in higher education

Administrative structure: A steering Committee to supervise and guiding the implementing agency for procurement and distribution with senior officials in the rank of Pr. Secretary/ Secretary of Departments like MSME &T, BCW, S Education, S. Affairs, Minorities Affairs was constituted. Backward Classes Welfare Department has been declared as nodal Department for implementation. West Bengal SC ST Development Corporation has been assigned the task of nodal agency for implementation. Interdepartmental Tender Committee was also constituted for observing procurement process. Nodal officers at District level were identified for implementation. SDOs, BDOs and Executive officers of Municipalities were aligned for implementation in a time bound manner.

Procurement: Procurement was through E-Tender as per existing norms of the State Government. Specifications were finalized in consultation with the "Research & Development Centre for bi-cycles & sewing machines", an entity created under joint effort of Punjab Government and UNDP. Entire process was kept transparent and status at different stages was notified in the public domain through <http://wbtenders.gov.in>, <https://wbsaboojsathi.gov.in>. Under the scheme, procurement has been made in three phases so far. Leading Indian manufacturers – Hero Cycles Ltd., TI Cycles Ltd and Avon cycles Ltd. were selected.

E-Governance in implementation: Implementation of the scheme has multi-dimensional challenges like collection of students' record, consignment tracking and management, selection of secured places for delivery, tagging of schools, deployment of huge no. of fitters from across the country, their logistics, security etc. and finally keeping distribution records in the public domain as proactive disclosure. <https://wbsaboojsathi.gov.in> was developed with dedicated support team of NIC to handle all the modules and to cater to the requirement of all the stakeholders of this mammoth scheme.

More than 8900 schools, 40 lakh students, 8,000 truck load of bicycle components, 2,500 delivery points, 3,500 fitters, 500+ Government officials, Panchayat functionaries, Elected

Members of WBLA, MPs were involved in implementation of the scheme. Students' records were entered on-line through portal by the schools, validated thereafter by Sub Inspectors of Schools, Additional District Inspectors / District Inspectors of Schools. BDOs performed the task of creating delivery points and tagging schools to finalise delivery point-wise requirement of Boys & Girls bicycles. Suppliers were given opportunity through portal to enter consignment details so that those can be tracked by the officials of State Government. Schools generated Distribution record from their individual log-in facility. Finally, the schools uploaded data like date of distribution, bi-cycle brand, Bi-cycle frame No. (Unique), particulars of student etc. District-wise, Block wise and individual student wise Distribution records were made available in the public domain on real time basis.

Present Status:

Under the scheme, 34.94 lakh bi-cycles had already been procured and distributed to target group students of class IX, X, XI & XII in two phases – in phase –I 25.34 lakh followed by 9.60 lakh in phase-II during two successive fiscals, 2015-16 and 2016-17. State Government has decided to maintain continuity and create a situation that students will get bi-cycles as soon as they are admitted to class IX. As such procurement process for another 25 lakh bi-cycles has been completed in Phase-III. Distribution has also been taken up simultaneously in all the Districts.

Bi-cycles procured in phase-II and phase-III will bear 10 special reflectors in accordance with the advisory issued by Hon'ble Supreme Court of India for rider's safety. Perhaps, West Bengal is the first to comply, state wide.
