1. BACKGROUND

The groups of out of school children is a heterogeneous one. The group includes children who have never been enrolled at school since no schooling facilities were available within a walking distance of 1 to 1.5 km. While there are children, who while living in habitations where schooling facilities are available, did not enroll because the family migrates every year in search of work or the children work with their parents in the family trade, take care of the household chores and also look after their younger siblings while both parents work. In the urban areas there are children who are living in slums on the streets on railway platforms, in the red light areas children working as domestic help, children working in shops etc. These children are sometimes living with their families while there are those who have run away from home and are now living on their own. Children living in difficult situations in urban area, especially in big cities and towns, often escape the education initiatives taken up in these areas. In urban areas, children of deprived communities often escape the education initiatives taken up in these areas. These children of the urban areas who are out of school are generally described as Deprived Urban Children”, DUC. They grow up being deprived of formal education, a fundamental right for every child in India. The DUC are usually found in the slums, pavements, railways platforms, market areas, shops, establishment, red light areas of the cities and towns in India. Majorities of these children in urban areas stay out of formal school. They can be seen loitering around aimlessly or fending for themselves availing errand jobs like rag picking, car repairing, train cleaning, begging, trading or working as domestic helps/ in shops/ hotel/ tea stalls / factories/ construction sites etc. for various reasons. Besides, majorities of them hail from women headed / single parent families or migrating families. Their living situations, daily work routine, behavioral disorders, family structures prevent them from attending routine formal schools. Hence, traits like low self-esteem, short attention span, hyper-activity, non-trusting attitude are predominant among the DUC. These factors on the one hand, explain the difficulties of DUC to attend formal schools, and on the other hand, justify the rationality for developing special education interventions for them.

Such diverse conditions and differing needs to each group of out of school children cannot be addressed through a single strategy.

Formulation of strategies needs to address the heterogeneous character of out of school children and their differing needs. The strategies need to be need specific and hence the spirit of the National Policy of Education which states “efforts
2. OBJECTIVE

To design innovative, need based education interventions for various group of Out of School child (following guidelines of Alternative Innovative Scheme) through running of Alternative & Innovative Centre in a Bus, provided by W.B.I.I.D.C.

To run AIE centre in a Bus (with Computer and multimedia facilities and taught about social behavior) to cover different groups of DUC to provide them Elementary Education.

3. STRATEGIES

In the first place, an involvement of multiple stakeholders will be required to ensure elementary education to DUC through a Bus especially because of their varied living situations, needs and characteristics. The project will be implemented by the Education Department and Sarva Shiksha Mission, jointly. The buses will go to red light areas, construction sites and slum areas where children do not have access to education or not enroll due to various reasons. The buses will go to three-four such points in different parts of Hooghly (Chinsurah Municipality and Bansberia Municipality, different slums, Railway Platform - bandel, serampore etc.) on everyday, park there for two hours and provide education to the children inside the bus and teach Language, Mathematics and Environmental Science at each for 2-3 hours. To ensure that the buses are going to the specified locations everyday, the education department will monitor its movement through a GIS system to be installed in the buses. In addition to learning to read, write and calculate, the children are taught social behaviour and about the world and possibilities beyond their neighbourhood. The health of the children improves as they learn personal hygiene, get vaccines and have the courage to go to hospitals. They also learn of the dangers of tobacco and drugs, and are made aware of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

The informal education structures need to be designed keeping in mind the characteristics and problems of those identified child, which hinder them from attending routine formal schools.

A synergy in the form of a Resource Group (District Resource Group) among various government departments, local NGOs, bilateral / multilateral funding agencies, media is essentially required for planning and implementing education interventions for School in a Bus. This synergy will be responsible for developing various town specific education intervention strategies for different groups of
those identified child. A synergy of this nature will usher in partnership, resources mobilization and joint effort required to successfully bring those identified child under education coverage on a sustained basis.

As far as the Government Departments are concerned, District Administration, District Police, Railways, Municipalities / Corporation, District Primary School Council, DI office, SDM, Town development authorities (if any), Corporate sectors, Department of Social welfare, Department of Labour (National Child Labour Programme), Department of Mass Education etc. can be a part of this synergy.

The intensive micro level, community based activities required for effective implementation of the School in Bus education project explains the need of involvement of local Non Government Organizations. The NGOs need to be selected by the District Resource Group. Under the guidelines of the DRG, the NGOs will implement the education project for School in a Bus in Hooghly district.

The involvement of will be required as the all the education interventions for School in a Bus will run in various municipal wards of the Corporation area. The ward Councillors, Ward Education Committee should play a key role in planning and implementation of the said project.

Certification of equivalence on the learning outcomes of the School in a Bus children and facilitating the mainstreaming of these children in to formal schools will be responsibility of the local school education department (DPSC, DI office).

Department of Social Welfare should also be a part of the synergy as its inputs will be required during planning of education interventions for special categories of deprived children like street children, child sex workers, orphan & abandoned children.

Involvement of Department of Labour (National Child Labour Programme) will be of help especially in designing and running special education interventions for working children.

The local business houses, corporate sectors (both public & private), Chamber of commerce and agencies like Rotary Club, Lions Club, Red Cross etc. should also be a part of the resource group for facilities activities (providing food to school, Health & business support) for which local resource mobilization
will be made to evolve different models of non formal education programme and agencies will be encouraged to evolve and adopt the most suitable model depending on the requirements of the target group.

For the purpose of planning the large number of out of school children can be categorized as following:

**Broad Categories**

A. Never Enrolled
   i. Living in small, remote schoolless habitations
   ii. Living in habitations where schools exist
B. Enrolled but do not attend
C. Enrolled but left school before completing schooling

Based on the nature of the group, out of school children can be categorized as follows:

1. Children living in remote / access less habitations
2. Children of families who migrate
3. Children engaged in Household chores
4. Children engaged in wage earning labour
5. Children from deprived urban communities
6. Children belonging to communities - where access is restrained due socio-religious beliefs & practices
7. Adolescent girls

The Mission of School on Wheels or Bus is to enhance and enrich educational opportunities for school-aged homeless children living in Hooghly chinsurah municipality, and urban areas of serampore sub division. Area covering around 800 (Approx.) out of school children. The School on Wheels brings education to children who do not go to regular school. These children may be forced to work because of poverty, or there may be no nearby government school, or they and their parents may not understand the value of education. The School on Wheels reaches out to them by bringing a school to where they live. It will take education to the door step of above mentioned deprived children or difficult to reach children who either can’t go to schools or have dropped out because of various reasons. It provides informal schooling on sidewalks and in spare
In this regard, it also needs to be mentioned that separate academic packages are required for each of the different types of children (Child specific), keeping in mind the nature of the child and objectives of the project. This academic package will be developed by the SSM office with the help of District Education Department to ensure quality of education.

1. ACTIVITIES AND SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The activities undertaken to provide appropriate education coverage to identified child for School in a Bus Project has three phases.

Phase I: Pre-project activities leading to development of a comprehensive plan of action

Phase II: Operationalization of the Project / Implementation of the Plan of Action

Phase III: Support / Additional Activities, Monitoring evaluation and qualitative Improvement

The board activities that need to be undertaken in above mentioned phases are as follows:

Phase I: Pre-project activities leading to development of a comprehensive plan of action

a. **Formation of District Resource Group** needs to be formed with representatives of key stakeholders like Department of School Education, other concerned government department, Municipalities / corporation, local NGOs as well as Voluntary Agencies etc.

b. **Training / Orientations** at different levels will be organized for capacity building of the personnel on various issues related to School in a Bus project.

c. **A need assessment survey** for identifying the Out of School children in each ward to estimate their number with break up on age, gender, mother tongue. Place to be identified where Bus will be visited for maximum coverage of Out of School Children.

d. Necessary arrangement for **Bus, Health Support, Providing food supplement**

   a. Provide the all apparatus to the Bus including Computer with
multimedia facility for running a AIE centre within the Bus etc. from various organizations.

Phase II: Operationalization of the Project / Implementation of the Plan of Action
The project will be implemented by District SSM office, Hooghly, through local NGOs as per SSM guidelines. This phase of the project will ensure to coverage the most of the out of school children in the locality.

Following are activities that need to be done during this phase:

a. DRG needs to identify local NGOs for implementing the Project for running School in a Bus Project for Deprived Urban Child under Hooghly Chinsurah and bausberia municipality as per SSM guidelines. The identification of NGOs may be done through newspaper advertisement, followed by selection by a selection committee.

b. NGO will be given a survey report of the wards allotted to them for reference and field verification. Initially the Out of School survey report (Enrolment Programme’9) may be used for the said project. If necessary, awareness campaigns should also be organized in the areas to create an enabling environment to work. Special efforts should also be made by the NGO to win trust of the difficult to reach out of school children to motivate them to join the Bus Education system.

c. The District authority should identify specific locations in the community, where Bus will reach and stay for a certain period of a day.

1. Capacity building of the network of implementing NGO in the form of workshops / training / exposure visits will be integral part of this phase. The education initiatives described earlier, require expertise especially with regard to running of special education centre in a bus, counseling of children & their community (parents), micro planning involving the community, ensuring appropriate application of academic package, organizing planning meetings, collecting data, financial management etc.

NGO will be required to identify instructors / supervisors / volunteers, as rules and regulations of SSM. These instructors/supervisors will be imparted house-wise training, especially on the academic aspects and counseling techniques.

Phase III: Support / Additional Activities. Monitoring evaluation and qualitative
Phase III will run simultaneously with Phase II of the said project. Considering certain characteristics of AIE centre especially their freedom loving nature, short attention span, hyper-activity, some additional activities need to be introduced (Playing with Toys, Showing motivational Movies, Cultural activities, Fine arts, performing arts etc.

One of the major pre-requisites to ensure regular attendance of enrolled child in the Bus is to provide counselling facility (both group and individual counseling). Help of Professional counsellors or staff with special counseling training need to be sought especially dealing with street children, adolescent girls, working children, child of sex workers etc. Counselling will facilitate them to overcome/reduce many of the behavioural disorders which act as hindrances for them to formal/alternative schools.

Besides, the child enrolled in the Bus to be mainstreamed from centres to formal school after certain span of time, will need support of remedial teaching, especially after school hours to help them to attend competencies equivalent to other students of the mainstream schools.

Majorities of these children suffer from health problem due to their living situations, habits and lack of knowledge on health seeking behaviours. Availability of Health check up facilities under support of Red Cross or Lions Club will act as incentives for these children to get enrolled and retained.

5. Proposed Expenditure for School in a Bus Project:

ACTIVITIES FOR PHASE I

a. The School in a Bus project in our District needs to be initiated through a centrally organized brainstorming and sensitisation workshop involving all the key stakeholders from various government departments (District administration, Department of Education - DPSC, DI office, SSM, NCLP, SSK, SSP etc.), Social welfare, Police, Railways Board, NGOs, Corporate Sectors, WBIIDC etc. to discuss on the issues related to education - School In a Bus.

b. The brainstorming workshop will be followed by formation of the District Resource Group (DRG) will representatives of the above stated stakeholders. District Project Officer, SSM act as the convener of the DRG.

c. The primary task of DRG, subsequent to its notification is selection of local NGO / NGOs for execution of different activities for the said project.
d. **A one day participatory workshop** will be conducted to strengthen the capacity of the NGOs and municipality personnel on the concept of School in a Bus project, the concept of DUC, their problems, issues related to their education in the said project. Besides operational steps of the project, roles of NGO, Municipality etc. will be clarified for better understanding.

e. **Resource mapping** will be done along with the need assessment survey to locate the existing education related resources like the education institutions, physical barriers to school accessibility, education initiatives pf local NGO and possible locations where Bus will go & stay for DUC to maximum coverage of Out of School Children.

f. Based on the above findings, Education strategies will be planned for and designed for different groups of DUC who will attain the School in a Bus project.

**ROLES & FUNCTIONS OF DISTRICT RESOURCE GROUP**

DRG will act as the main decision making body, with regard to the policies and planning for education of School in a Bus project in the District.

The DRG will be responsible for selection of NGOs for the project.

The DRG will keep it self updated on the progress of the activities required to the executed.

The DRG may guide in planning, designing education strategies, and packages for different group of Out of School Children.

The DRG will be responsible for mobilizing resources locally for the activities stated under different phases.

The DRG will ensure accountability, transparency and communication among different agencies for mobilizing fund / other resources for the project.