

Education Is A Right Not A Privilege- Don't Let Education Pay for Crisis

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Abstract

Full literacy - Still a distant dream. India has no shortage of school, though not all of them are accessible and drop rates are high. It has been estimated that it will be home to the largest number of illiterate people in the world by the turn of the century. The current literacy rate in India is 48% though it has the 2nd largest schooling system in the world. One question nagging the minds of all is why innumerable plans and schemes have failed to achieve 100% literacy in this land of Saraswati, the deity of knowledge.

The circumstances differ the reasons vary. But the underlying fact remains that constitutional directive providing entitlement to free and compulsory education to all children under 14 remains a distant dream in India.

Introduction:

Every child has the right to education. Education for All means education for all children. Every child has the right to a good-quality education. Failing to meet these goals will have a serious impact upon children – and on all our futures. When children do not have access to adequate education, societies suffer and a country's development is impeded. Children who miss out on education will not have the chance to develop the skills they need to become better citizens, parents and community members nationally and globally.

Getting these children into school is possible. Education systems that are equitable and reflect an inclusive education enable all children to access education free from discrimination. Barriers that prevent children from poorer households from going to school must be addressed, including the progressive removal of school fees, implementing school health and nutrition programmes, social protection and livelihoods programmes, and multilingual education that reflects language diversity. Governments must strengthen the key role played by civil society and community-based mechanisms that monitor children's access to school.

Causes:

Lack of Equipment: According to the Ministry of Human resource Development, there is no shortage of schools in India. At least one primary school is located within a range of 3 kms but what it fails to realize is that not all of these schools are accessible to every child expected to go school. A fisherman in Kayipadi, a village in Kerala, recalls: "children of our village were never sent to school even though the nearest was less than 2 kms away. this was because it meant crossing a river, a railway line and a highway.

The planners take pride in providing a proper building for each school. Unfortunately, provision for the accompanying infrastructure is generally deficient. As a result, only one in five schools has toilet facilities. Only 30% of the schools are equipped with proper chalk and duster and only 25% are equipped with libraries. Only 7% of the teachers

undergo training.

High dropout rate: Yet another problem is the high drop out rate. It is calculated that out of every 3 children enrolled in grade 1 two leave school before reaching grade 3. This is largely due to poverty and unplanned families.

CONFLICTS AND EMERGENCIES: THE HIDDEN EDUCATION CRISIS

Despite the importance and benefits of education, and the fact that education is often what children, their families and communities want and prioritise in times of crisis, there is a failure to deliver education when children need it most. In conflicts or rapid onset emergencies a child has less chance of getting a decent education. In conflict affected areas, one in four children are out of school compared to one in eleven in other low- and lower-middle-income areas; girls are continually disadvantaged; and children are less likely to be able to read

Suggestions: The time is not for fine words but for action. We particularly call on governments to take the following steps to address crucial areas in need of immediate attention.

- Reflect commitment to education in national budgets :In defining national education budgets, government should consider the lost opportunities associated with not investing enough in education and the impact this will have on poverty, unemployment and marginalisation.
- Allocating a fair and adequate percentage of the national budget – one that reflects the scale and educational needs of children – should consider work conditions of teachers, investment in quality teaching, and the development of safe infrastructure.
- Governments should develop legislative frameworks and implement comprehensive national policies that support teachers through training, professional development and improving working conditions. Incentives for teachers in rural settings and harder-to-reach areas should also be included.
- States affected by conflict should commit to allocating at least 20% of their national budgets to education, and work with civil society to remove all financial, cultural and social barriers that prevent the most marginalised children from going to school.
- Secure essential funding for education in emergencies Funding education in emergencies is essential to delivering education for all. In short, if children in emergencies do not have access to education, the ultimate objective will not be fulfilled. Concentrating on creating greater education opportunities builds peace and national stability.

Conclusion: India is gradually making better use of its human resources and striving to improve the economic and social conditions of its people. But much still needs to be done to make the following lines of the great Indian poet Rabindra Nath Tagore come true, " Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free".

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