

A PUBLIC MANIFESTO FOR THE EDUCATION OF INDIA's CHILDREN

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2019 is a watershed year for the country and the education of India's children. The upcoming national elections provide an opportunity for India's citizens to demand that India's leader express their commitment to quality education from birth to 18 years of age and take concrete immediate steps to ensure improvement in its quality and equity education. India can no longer permit the existing gross inequalities in the education system to persist; poor education must no longer be deemed acceptable for India's development.

India's three major Civil Society Networks: Right to Education Forum, Campaign against Child Labour (CACL) and Alliance for the Right to Early Childhood Development have come together to launch a national campaign to demand the right to quality education for all children from birth until the age of 18 years and ensure an end to child labour. These two issues must enter the core agenda for the upcoming General Elections. This manifesto has been prepared through the efforts of these three networks and marks their collective commitment to the development of India's children.



OUR DEMANDS

TEN CORE DEMANDS: RIGHT TO FREE, QUALITY, EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR ALL FROM BIRTH TILL THE AGE OF 18 YEARS AND FREEDOM FROM CHILD LABOUR

1. Extend the purview of RTE Act from birth to 18 years, in line with the internationally recognized definition of childhood, by including ECCE, Preschool and higher secondary education as legal entitlements
2. Take urgent action to reverse declining expenditure on education as a share of the GDP and bring it to at least 6 percent of GDP in line with the global education financing benchmarks and Kothari Commission recommendations.
3. Ensure complete implementation of the RTE Act along with norms and standards in true letter and spirit and make the State accountable for its implementation
4. The government must invest in strengthening SMCs and community participation in education.
5. Take steps to address inequality in education by moving from multi-layered education system and move towards the creation of a ‘common school system’.
6. Take stringent and closely monitored steps to ensure social inclusion and provision of safe and secure school environment in all schools and ECCE centres and address the specific barriers to education faced by Adivasi, Dalit, Muslim minority children and girls and children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
7. Ensure the total eradication of child labour up to the age of 18 years and remove the provision in Section 3 of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 which legalizes child labour in ‘family enterprise’.
8. Elected peoples’ representatives at all levels (centre, state and PRIs) to take concrete steps to uphold their commitment to universal, quality, and equitable public education in safe and secure environment until 18 years of age.
9. Stop increase of commercialization and privatization of education and strengthen the accountability of private schools and ECCE Centres by drafting, implementing and enforcing a national regulatory framework including regulation of fees, compliance with quality norms and addressing social segregation through the growth of private provision.
10. Governments must commit to strengthening grievance redress mechanisms in instances of violations of educational rights of children.
11. Keep No Detention under the Right to Education Act
12. Stop mass scale closure of government schools in the name of merger and re-open those that have been closed

AGE SPECIFIC ASKS IN SUPPORT OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Birth-6 Years- Early Childhood Care and Education

1. **Include Early Childhood Care and Education as a justiciable entitlement under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 to provide free, quality*, inclusive and equitable** early childhood care and education (ECCE) for all children under six years.**

*Quality: By quality we mean health, care, nutrition, early learning, preschool education, and safety and protection for the holistic development of all children under six. Quality standards as per National ECCE policy.

**Inclusion: Including all Vulnerable and marginalized children

***Equity provisions requires that additional measures are put in place to address the disadvantages of children from vulnerable communities

****non-discrimination should be ensured in principle and practice

SCHOOL EDUCATION 6-14: Elementary Education

2. Ensure all out of school children are brought into school and address on war footing the reasons for dropout among India's children.
3. The governments must fill all vacancies with fully qualified teachers and strengthen academic support systems and capacities of education administration cadres
4. Ensure that evaluation of students and schools is comprehensive and undertaken with a spirit of supporting the individual needs and not just accountability

14-18 Years: SECONDARY AND HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION

5. **Expand public provision of secondary education to ensure universal free access up to higher secondary education**

Ten Core Demands: Right to Free, Quality, Equitable education for all until the age of 18 years and freedom from Child Labour

- 1. Extend the purview of RTE Act from birth to 18 years, in line with the internationally recognized definition of childhood by including ECCE, Preschool and higher secondary education as legal entitlements.**
- 2. Take urgent action to reverse declining expenditure on education as a share of the GDP and bring it to at least 6 percent of GDP in line with the global education financing benchmarks and Kothari Commission recommendations.**

The Project Implementing Agencies (PIA) of SSA should be held accountable for under-expenditure of approved funds. Financial systems need to be automated, streamlined, and necessary accounting, admin and finance personnel need to be recruited and trained to minimize financial bottlenecks and delays.



There is a need to extend the RTE Act to cover early childhood care and education and secondary and senior secondary education in line with existing SDG commitments to deliver a minimum of 12 years of free and compulsory education.

In 2017, India only spent 2.7% of its GDP on education. Current per child expenditures in educationally lagging poorer states continue to fall short of the expenditure needed to ensure adherence to the RTE norms; Bihar spends only 30% of what is required to implement the Act in totality¹. This drives down the quality of its education.

Financing to states for education need to be equitable, timely, commensurate with the current financial requirements to ensure RTE Implementation. The central share to education funding has declined which has particularly affected educationally lagging, populous and low income states. The GOI-state fund-sharing ratio for SSA was revised in October 2015, to 60:40 (previously 65:35). Thus, in FY 2017-18 the funds requested by PAB of SSA was at INR 55,000 crore, the Government of India (GOI) SSA budget for the year was INR 23,500 crore. The release made by the central government as the percentage of the PAB approved Central share has reduced from 79.7 percent in 2013-14 to just 42.7 percent in 2017-18. The central government explains that the reduction of central investment on education is the result of great devolution of funds to the States.



3. Within the next three years, ensure complete implementation of the RTE Act along with norms and standards in true letter and spirit and make the State accountable for its implementation

4. The government must invest in strengthening SMCs and other formal structures for community participation in education by

- Enhancing allocations for strengthening School Management Committees to enable all of its members to be trained and supported
- Ensure SMC constitution all the schools and ECCE Centres in a

However, recent research suggests that expenditure on education from the States has not increased to pick up the slack. Expenditure on school education has not increased, with the centre withdrawing from its responsibility². Models of funding education based on regressive taxation like the Education Cess, need to be phased out with the funding for education instead coming from core government revenues.

The proportion of funds spent out of total approved budgets under SSA also fell from 84 percent in FY 2013-14 to 66 percent in FY 2016-17. In FY 2017-18, until 30 June 2017, INR 7157 crore, equivalent to just 9 percent of the approved budget was spent. This chronic problem is the result of a small but serious problems that have not been adequately addressed till date³.

Despite the RTE Act providing for all schools to attain all norms in a time bound fashion, the rate of compliance of schools with the norms and provisions of the RTE Act is at abysmal of 12.7%. Indeed, classroom conditions have deteriorated from 2013 to 2016. According to latest UDISE 2016-17 data, percentage of government elementary school classrooms in good condition have declined from 75.3 to 73.2. Only 57.97 % of the Government Management Schools were electrified.⁴

The RTE Act provides for a school management committee (SMC) in elementary schools (sections 21-22) to provide parents a voice in decision making in how their schools are run. However, in FY 2016-17, only 48.8 % (i.e. 4,81,980) of schools constituted SMCs and had more than 9 meetings during last academic year⁵. Total of 3,91,760 schools in FY 2016-17 did not have SMCs to begin with. While similar structures exist in secondary schools, they lack the same powers that SMCs have. Similar structures are needed

democratic independent manner through elections

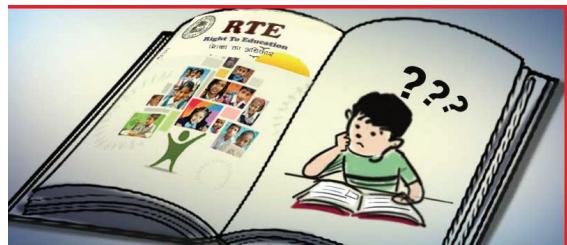
- c. Formation of federations of school management committees & ECCE monitoring committees on the lines currently practiced in Karnataka
- d. Taking action on social issue like child marriage and child labour through a common minimum programme at national & state level to follow up the messages specific to each state [local language] to combat child marriage.⁵
- e. Training on the RTE Act in its extended form in line with the demands of the Panchayati Raj institutions, which have been designated as Local Authorities under the Act.

5. Taking steps to address inequality in education by moving from multi layered education system and move towards the creation of a 'common school system'.
A roadmap to ensure that all government schools move towards adoption of Kendriya Vidyalaya norms needs to be developed and funded.

6. Take stringent and closely monitored steps to ensure non-discrimination and social inclusion and provision of safe and secure school environment in all schools and ECCE centres and address the specific barriers to education faced by Adivasi, Dalit, Muslim minority

for preschool and ECCE centres. While there is a provision for Anganwadi level Monitoring & Support Committees, it fails to provide for majority of representation of the community or recognize the role of the community in planning.

At the same time, there has not been a corresponding focus on the role of the Local Authority, the Panchayati Raj institutions. There has not been a focus on building their capacities to enable them to take on the extensive role expected.



Unequal education systems create unequal lifelong opportunities for India's children. This in turn creates an unequal society and results in wasted potential on innumerable children who lack access to good quality opportunities in childhood. The government runs Kendriya Vidyalaya schools for central government employees, especially those in transferable jobs. Costs per child incurred in KV's is roughly 27,000 INR per child; this contrasts with an annual average of only 3,000 Rs per student across India⁷. This discriminatory funding gap needs to be closed to ensure all of India's children have the same opportunities.

Discrimination, harassment and violence against children from socially excluded and marginalized communities and girls has continued even as the RTE (section 17) and RPWD Acts categorically mandate that no child should be discriminated.⁸ Thus, Valmiki children still face discrimination where, they are made to sit separately, not

children and girls and children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

- a. Teacher education curriculum and pedagogy to equip teachers to address own social location and possible bias and attitude and skills to address discrimination and promote social inclusion in class rooms and schools. Teacher assessment and school assessment should include non-discrimination in principle and practice
- b. Revise curricula to positive representation and contribution of these communities
- c. Promote teaching in mother tongue, especially tribal languages and Urdu as a medium of instruction, especially in the early grades.
- d. Ensure availability of adequate numbers of special educators trained in addressing all forms of disability to provide onsite support to schools, train all teachers on inclusive education, ensure that all schools adhere to principles of universal design and provide reasonable accommodation and ensure that necessary aids, appliances and teaching learning materials reach students in time.
- e. Enhance the quality and safety of residential schools (including tribal ashrams and provisions like seasonal hostels for children of migrant families) adhere to KGBV school norms
- f. Scholarships to children from disadvantaged communities should be enhanced to meet all costs of schooling till senior secondary, and

allowed to touch water pots and humiliated by addressing them by their caste name and attributes.⁹ Crimes against children have also increased from 89,423 in 2014 to 1,06,958 in 2016. At the same time, the specific barriers to accessing quality education experienced by marginalized social groups and Children With Disabilities require urgent action.

Sections 8 C and 9 C of the RTE Act also talk about the role of the schools and local authorities to address discrimination



Photo: Save the Children

not place any burden on families.

g. Address barriers of older girls' participation in school through providing

- security measures both in schools and communities for girls to attend school and Anganwadi centers safely
- Providing crèche facilities in schools to release girls from sibling care responsibilities, while ensuring holistic development in the foundational years of the young child.

h. Ensure that all schools have or develop a non-discrimination and inclusion charter

i. Gradually introducing English language in progressively higher grades in line with peoples' aspirations

7. **Ensure the total eradication of child labour up to the age of 18 years and remove the provision in Section 3 of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 which legalizes child labour in 'family enterprise'.** Furthermore, it should

- Reverse the reduction of the list of hazardous occupations and include newly emerging occupations like e-waste.
- Remove the punishment clause for parents/ guardians; in contrast, stronger enforcement of penalties on employers needs to be put in place. Social security measures must be strengthened for families of child labourers
- Constitute Child and Adolescent Labour Rehabilitation fund.



Every child up to 18 years, as per UNCRC Declaration of which India is also a signatory, must be protected from any form of child labour. The SDG Target 8.7 also states ending child labour in all forms by 2025.

Allowing children to work risk violating these children's right to education. It affects the retention rate of children in schools and increases dropouts of children from marginalized sections. Given the absence of monitoring mechanisms, it provides loopholes to put children to work even during school hours. It also prevents children from getting time for play and leisure recognized by the UNCRC, ratified by India and prevents them from doing homework.

Study conducted by V. V. Giri National Labour Institute shows that the



enforcement of Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986 was very poor. The punishment of employers in the past 30 years has been negligible. The punishment clause to the parents will only help labour Inspectors to inflate statistics of punishment, by punishing the parents for their poverty. Social Security measures should be extended to families of child labourers, rather than sending them to jail, which in turn will increase child labour.

The Child Labour Act provides for rehabilitation of children and adolescent victims. It provides for setting up of the Child and Adolescent Labour Rehabilitation Fund in which all the amounts of penalty have to be realised. There is no Child Labour Free District in India, though claimed so by some of the State Governments. Peren District in Nagaland has the highest percentage of child labourers (37.38%) and Thrissur District in Kerala has the lowest percentage of child labourers (0.73%). Hence, the Fund should be constituted in all Districts.

8. Elected peoples' representatives at all levels (centre, state and PRIs) to take concrete steps to uphold their commitment to universal, quality, and equitable public education in safe and secure environment until 18 years of age.
 - i. They must commit to
 - a. monitor the status of RTE

Worldwide whenever surveys are done of what matters to citizens- education emerges as one of the top priorities¹⁰. It is the responsibility of their elected peoples' representatives to work to ensure that these aspirations are not betrayed. The RTE Act in its current form seeks the fundamental right to education of 250 million children. The Act if amended will be a critical step to ensuring the future of

implementation in their constituencies,

- b. ensuring an end of discrimination and minimize inequality and discrimination in education,
- c. support girls' education and
- d. complete abolition of child labour in all forms.

ii. The government must convene a meeting of all Chief Ministers and Education Ministers of the state to take stock of the implementation of RTE Act and prepare a road map for making it a reality within 6 months of taking office. A meeting of the National Development Council may be devoted to taking stock & planning for the complete implementation of RTE Act.

iii. A special session of Parliament should be held to address the issue of universalization and implementation of the RTE Act

9. Strengthen the accountability of private schools and ECCE Centres by drafting, implementing and enforcing a national regulatory framework including regulation of fees, compliance with quality norms and addressing social segregation through the growth of private provision. Government must take immediate steps to ensure all private schools adhere to the conditions under which recognition is granted and no unrecognized schools are permitted to run. The appropriate government department should take action to nationalize or shut down unrecognized schools or

the entire 41% of India's population that is under 18 years of age. It will extend the right to another 163 million that are under six and another hundred million that are above the age of 14¹¹. Therefore, the government (and its elected representatives) should take its implementation with the seriousness it deserves.

While we seek an individual commitment, ensuring delivery of education is a fundamental responsibility of the State. Specific responsibilities of different levels of government for Elementary education have been laid down under sections 8 & 9 of the RTE Act. These responsibilities must then be extended to ECCE and Secondary education as well if the right is extended to these age groups.

The last few years have seen a sharp increase in the number of private schools as well as in the number of students enrolled in them. While government schools increased in numbers by less than 2%, private schools went up by 24.28%. While enrolment in public schools declined by 8.5%, it increased by 24.42% in private schools¹². Simultaneously, efforts have been made to hand over government schools to private parties in PPP mode (eg. In Rajasthan).

The situation is no different for ECCE provision where the non-state sector forms the second largest form of provision (after

schools running in violation of conditions under which recognition is granted especially in instances of continued contravention. This to be done only after the students are moved to adjoining government schools so their education is not affected



the ICDS). However, unlike school education, no binding regulations exist for these providers. This puts children's education, health and well-being at risk by placing India's youngest children in a totally unregulated sector.

Even in school education, however, a large number of schools continue to run without a certificate of recognition. Thus, CBSE has recently had to reiterate that "It has come to the notice of the board that schools are showing a lax attitude towards the provisions contained in the RTE Act and its rules regarding academic betterment as well as the safety and security of the students. In many of the states, schools are functioning even though they have not obtained any recognition certificate from their respective state education departments¹³. Punitive measures and incidents of closure or nationalization of schools or ECCE Centres that fail to adhere to norms have been few.

Several states have dedicated legislations on the regulation of private schools, especially fees; these largely fail to consider the specific needs of the youngest children. However, adherence to the same has been problematic. This affects poor and middle class families alike. An Assocham survey shows that 65% of parents spend more than half of their take-home pay on their children's education and extra-curricular activities. Parental spending on a single child's education has gone up from Rs 35,000 in 2005 to over 94,000 in 2011.

Section 23 of the RTE Act provides for an end to capitation fees and prohibits screening at the time of admission. Experience suggests that these provisions continue to be violated. At the same time, while



10. Governments must commit to strengthening grievance redress mechanisms in instances of violations of educational rights of children.
 - a. Critical positions like Chairperson and member-RTE must never be left vacant in National and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights. Commission capacities must be enhanced to make them functionally independent, adequately staffed and fully financed entities.
 - b. Existing grievance redress systems are to be redesigned so each child or parent whose right to education is violated has access to timely, just and commensurate remedies if their right to quality, free education is violated.

several states have regulatory frameworks for private schools, it is time for a formal legal framework at the national level to regulate all forms of non-state schools and ECCE Centres.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, NCPCR, is tasked as the apex body for grievance redress under the RTE Act (sections 31-34). However, a large number of these positions are vacant. However, an uninterrupted chain of grievance redress is needed to ensure complaints on violations are reported, investigated in a timely fashion and redressed. This entails strengthening mechanisms of redress at the school/ECCE Centre and administrative levels, apart from strengthening the functioning of the commissions.



<p>11. Keep No Detention under the RTE Act. The government, both centre and states, must address root causes of poor quality education by putting in place adequate pupil teacher ratios, enhancing implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Education as a critical measure of identifying and supporting students' learning needs., and strengthen administrative cadres to improve planning, monitoring and accountability for quality education.</p>	<p>The decision to roll back NDP policy through the RTE Second Amendment Bill 2017 effectively penalizes students for the system's failure to provide quality education to India's poor children and is discriminatory to marginalized communities risking increased drop out and increase the number of children out of school ²⁵. It also ignores the existing Supreme Court verdict on the issue (that has upheld No Detention), has the potential to damage the internal coherence of the RTE Act, and is retrogressive with respect to India's international obligations on the Right to Education.</p>
<p>12. Stop mass scale closure of government schools in the name of merger and re-open those that have been closed. Evidence suggests that the "mergers" contribute to increasing dropout and violates the provision under section 3(1) that ensures right of every child (6-14 years) to free & compulsory education in a 'neighborhood school' till completion of elementary education. No School should close without permission from the Gram Sabha in line with the rights vested in it under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.</p>	<p>As per media reports, the centre is contemplating location-specific merger of about 2,60,000 small government schools as part of its rationalization process to "enhance efficiency" ¹⁶. The school mergers and closures have resulted in increasing the number of drop-outs, especially children from marginalized communities and girls, due to reasons such as increased distance to school, location of the new schools (often in upper caste areas where children from lower castes feel threatened), lack of transport facilities and safety issues (highway on the way to school) among others.¹⁷ The closure/ merger policy is also a contravention of the fundamental spirit behind the section 6 of the RTE Act, as well as Section 3 (1). In many states, merged schools are far beyond the 1 KM radius of the closed school. This subverts the accountability of state to ensure schools within 1 km radius.¹⁸</p>

AGE SPECIFIC ASKS ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Birth-6 Years- Early childhood care and childhood education

Our Demands	Status	Basis
<p>13. Include Early Childhood Care and Education a justiciable entitlement under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 to provide free and quality early childhood care and education (ECCE)* for all children under six years.</p> <p>The entitlement must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensure access to early childhood care and education with equity and inclusion** for all children. b) Ensure the quality standards and norms for under six year children as per the National ECCE policy c) Allocate adequate budget to ensure provision of ECCE for all children under six 	<p>There is legal opinion in favour of Amendments to RTE to include under sixes in its ambit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Law Commission in its report 259 'Early Childhood Development and Legal Entitlements' recommends that "... statutory backing should be given to the existing schemes and policies in order to create legal entitlements in favour of children. This should be coupled with an integrated and holistic approach to protecting the interests of the young child, keeping in mind the need for health, nutrition, care and education as the primary inputs for early childhood development". ✓ The Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan judgement means that education is a fundamental right for this age group even now. CABE Committee is actively discussing these amendments to the RTE Act and MHRD has already made the first steps towards taking responsibility for education provisions. <p>ECCE is critical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Return on Investment in ECD: World Bank study in India (2015) established a rate of return of Rs 25 to every Re1 invested for India with incorporation of early childhood education/development in school education. ✓ Learning begins at birth and is a continuum and a cumulative process. The needs of each stage of a child's life is to be addressed with quality integrated inputs in an age-appropriate manner. ✓ There is robust neuroscience evidence which proves that fastest brain development happens up to 3 years of 	<p>The 86th Constitutional Amendment, through Article 45, as a Directive Principles says "the State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years".</p> <p>UNCRC – India has ratified the UNCRC in 1992 and thus committed to ensure the four set of child rights – the right to survival, the right to development, the right to protection and the right to participation for all children, including those under six.</p> <p>In Unni Krishnan, J P vs. State of Andhra Pradesh (1993) case, the Supreme Court held that the Right to free education up to the age of 14 years should be read in light of Article 21 of the Constitution - as being part and parcel of the Right to Life which every citizen is entitled to.</p> <p>National ECCE Policy 2013 exists and provides a framework for ECCE provision in the country</p> <p>Right to Education Act (2009) Section 11: "With a view to prepare children above the age of three years for elementary education and to provide early childhood care and</p>

* By Quality Early Childhood Care and Education we mean health, nutrition, care, early learning, preschool education, safety & protection for the holistic development of all children under six.

** including all vulnerable and marginalized children

***Equity provisions requires that additional measures are put in place to address the disadvantages of children from vulnerable communities

****non-discrimination should be ensured in principle and practice

age and maximum up to the age of six years. The environment and experience during this stage have profound lifelong impact on child's cognitive, language, physical and socio-emotional development.

- ✓ Poor school readiness leads low learning outcomes in elementary grades. Addressing the integrated needs of health, nutrition, early learning and education, care & protection, safety along with supportive parenting of this age group (3-6 years), will ensure school readiness and improved performance of children in elementary school, impacting lives of 15.8 crore children under six years in India (Census, 2011).

Status of ECCE:

- ✓ As per the Rapid Survey on Children, 2013-14 data (by WCD and UNICEF) – only 38% of children in the age group of 3-6 years are enrolled in pre-school education in government Anganwadi Centres. The data from pre-primary sections (3-6 years) in government schools shows that 65% of these do not have a teacher and the Pupil teacher ratio is 34:1 as against 20:1 stated ECCE Policy¹⁴.
- ✓ 35.7% children under 5 years who are underweight, 38.4% are stunted and 21% are wasted as per the NFHS 4 data. Also, more than half population of children age 6 – 59 months are anaemic – 58.4%
- ✓ Budget Limitation: Allocation for Anganwadi Services increased by only 7% from Rs 15,245 crore in FY 2017-18 to Rs 16,335 crore in FY 2018-19. The share of Anganwadi Services out of total MWCD budget has decreased from 72% in FY 2017-18 to 66% in FY 2018-19¹⁵.

education for all children until they complete the age of six years, the appropriate Government may make necessary arrangement for providing free pre-school education for such children”

UN Third Committee Omnibus Resolution

A/65/452 at the UNGA 65th session gives ECCE highest priority in the Post-2015 Agenda

SDG Goal 4 of Quality Education, target

4.2 states: 'By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education'

Simultaneously, the Education 2030 Framework of Action commits all countries, including India, to provision of pre-primary education.

SCHOOL EDUCATION 6-14 : Elementary Education

14. Ensure all out of school children are brought into school and address on war footing the reasons for dropout among India's children. The government must

- Ensure states adhere to a universal definition of dropout,
- put in place mechanisms for identification of children out of school and strengthen tracking of attendance to identify those at risk of dropout
- ensure on demand provision of quality special training facilities commensurate with the true numbers of children out of school
- Enhance overall allocations for special training.
- Clear implementation framework for special training dropouts and out of school students of upper primary and lower secondary ages need to be developed, implemented and financed
- Take steps to Improve quality of instruction (especially in the mother tongue) and particularly emphasize early grade learning.
- Enhance provision of short stay homes and other facilities for the education of nomadic communities, migrant labourers and construction workers
- Universalize access to ECCE services to strengthen the capacity to learn and improve

According to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), 62.1 million children are out of school in India. The 2011 Census estimated the figure at 84 million—nearly 20% of the age group covered under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Irrespective of the estimate, India has one of the largest number of children out of school in the world that calls for urgent action. There is a continued lack of consistent definition of what constitutes out of school- the new national definition- 30 days of continuous unexcused absence, is a start, but would be inadequate; more regular touch points are needed to create timely corrective measures to ensure timely regular attendance.

The RTE Act provides for bridging mechanisms for out-of-school children. However, the implementation of the special training faces issues of untrained, underqualified and poorly remunerated unprofessional teachers. There has been absence of necessary learning materials and infrastructure in special training centres, inadequate budgeting and delayed release of funds.¹⁹

People are constantly on the move in India. According to UNESCO²⁰, around 9 million people in India move to live in another state every year; rates of those migrating within their state also doubled over just ten years. In 2013, 10 million children lived in rural households with a family member who was a seasonal worker. Eight out of ten migrant children in worksites in a survey of seven Indian cities lacked access to education. Up to 40% of children from seasonal migrant households are likely to end up in work, rather than school, facing exploitation and abuse. The government needs to develop a clear policy and program to address the educational needs of this population. This includes overarching frameworks and strategies at both source and destination commensurate with the scale of the population

retention, along with other socio-economic factors.

affected. Residential facilities and support is needed to enable children to experience uninterrupted education

The government must invest in laying strong foundations through provision of universal ECCE services and establishment of organic linkage between them and school education.

15. Any education system is only as good as its teachers. The governments must fill all vacancies with fully qualified teachers and strengthen academic support systems and capacities of education administration cadres. Thus,

- All teacher vacancies to be filled with permanent, full time, professionally qualified and academically trained teachers paid commensurate with other professions.
- Improve pre-service teacher training by strengthening academic support systems including SCERTs and establishing more DIETs and ensuring that they have adequate qualified faculty. Draft Action Plan based on Justice Verma Commission recommendations and the Supreme Court directive of 2013. This includes establishing teacher education programmes in existing university- based institutes of liberal arts and sciences.
- Undertake teacher rationalization to address rural – urban and other disparities in pupil teacher ratio. Female teachers need to be appointed especially in the Muslim minority area to

Over 9,07,585 teacher posts vacant in the country, especially in educationally lagging states which contribute 70% share of these vacant posts namely Bihar (2,03,650) Uttar Pradesh (1,74,666), West Bengal (85,835), Jharkhand (73,793 / 8.13%), Madhya Pradesh (63,851) and Chhattisgarh (43,100). ²¹ All teacher vacancies were by law expected to be filled by 2013 and another two years to ensure their training and regularization (2015). According to DISE 2016, 26.3% of government schools have PTR more than 30 at primary level, and around 14% of schools have PTR more than 35 at upper primary level.

While the CRCs are expected to provide supportive supervision to government schools, a lot of the time of personnel is instead spent on collecting data from schools and the quality and extent of onsite support also varied with the number of visits CRCs make to each school in a year varying from 1 in Kerala and 19.3 in West Bengal²². Furthermore, CRCs often do not have the expertise to understand needs of teachers and conduct trainings on that basis. Some states also lack a dedicated CRC cadre.

Indeed, the percentage of schools visited by BEO /BRC who are responsible for monitoring schools has declined over years and in 2016-17 only 55.2% were visited. About 70% of the district education officers and 42% of block education officers had ‘dual charge’, i.e., they were in charge of more than one district or block. With each district catering to hundreds of schools, this is no mean task. Further, only 30% of the Block Resource Coordinators and 54% Cluster Resource

ensure regular attendance and participation of girls in teaching learning process.

- d. Strengthen Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) to enable them to become sites of peer support and onsite learning of teachers. This entails ensuring Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator positions are filled with full time, qualified and experienced staff and adequate infrastructure is provided to CRCs.
- e. Capacities of education administration cadre enhanced to improve planning, monitoring and accountability in both government and private schools.

Coordinators had received training for their jobs.²³ This lead to inadequate monitoring of schools, both government and private.

The challenge of training 11 lakh teachers needs to be seen in the light of the Justice Verma Committee recommendation, now law under the NCTE regulations, 2014: 'As a matter of policy, the first professional degree/diploma in teacher education should be offered only in face-to-face mode.' State provision for teachers to acquire qualification through the distance mode, poorly operationalized since 2010, now stands contrary to law.²⁴ In contrast, the recent MHRD initiative is to provide teacher training through distance mode.



16. Ensure that evaluation of students and schools is comprehensive and undertaken with a spirit of supporting the individual needs and not just accountability.

- a. Student learning must promote children's holistic intellectual and social growth and not be limited to attainment of narrowly defined attainment of literacy, numeracy and subject expertise.
- b. At the same time, schools must be evaluated through a mechanism that combines input from teachers, parents and local communities and includes a comprehensive set of input and process indicators of quality and equity.
- c. It is essential to recognize that inputs are needed to get outcomes. Consequently, we oppose the move by Niti Aayog to replace RTE input norms with learning outcomes.

Student evaluation must be undertaken through a comprehensive process of formative assessment undertaken by teachers and in a way that supports student learning, CCE, which was formulated with the purpose of supporting and facilitating enhanced learning for new school entrants and first-generation learners, was wrongly framed and poorly implemented, denying an important equity provision.²⁶ Consequently, there is a need to implement CCE in its original spirit.

Similarly, comprehensive measures of quality are needed to understand and support provision of quality and equity in schools. The NITI Aayog move to potentially replace existing RTE input norms with learning outcomes would no longer make it essential for all schools to adhere to binding minimum norms and standards on pupil-teacher ratios, teacher education requirements and library provision etc. Quality education cannot be provided without these basic perquisites. The abolition of school norms has long been an ask of low fees unrecognized private schools and the move risks promoting further mushrooming of substandard fees charging private schools, instead of promoting public provision.



14-18 Years : SECONDARY AND HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION

17. Expand public provision of secondary education to ensure universal free, access to secondary education. This in turn entails:

- Opening of additional secondary schools within 5 km to enable universal access, especially for girls
- Abolition of school fees in secondary schools
- Expansion of free provision of accelerated learning for children who have dropped out before completing school education, especially girls.
- Provision of vocational education at +2 level
- Enhance financing for secondary education while ensuring equity in allocation, putting the educational needs of marginalized groups and girls first.



With elementary education inching towards universalization, it is critical to address the barriers to universal provision of secondary education. There is a sharp decline in number of free, public schools and an increase in the distance to be travelled by children in order to access education. In 2015-16, for every 100 elementary schools (classes I to VIII) in rural India, there were 14 offering secondary (classes IX-X) and only six offering higher secondary grades (classes XI-XII). It has not helped that so many secondary schools are privately-owned, fee-charging schools. At the elementary level, only 5% listed in the official statistics are private unaided schools while 40% schools offering secondary or higher secondary grades are private, unaided institutions.

According to UNICEF, 47 million adolescents in India are dropouts, the highest number in any country in the world²⁷. 40% of adolescent girls are not attending school²⁸. While provisions exist for accelerated learning (special training) exist at the elementary stage, such provisions are absent at the secondary stage. At the same time, there is a need to strengthen and provide vocational and lifeskill education for children, especially girls, at higher secondary levels.

At the same time, education is not free at the secondary stage. Secondary schooling is 2.5 times more expensive than primary schooling for the poorest. Households spend between 7-18% of their income on secondary education; government secondary education would consume as much as third of the disposable income of India's poorest²⁹

At the same time, investments in secondary education have remained inadequate, especially if one aims for universalization of education. While making these investments, however, priority will need to be given to remote underserved locations and addressing the needs of marginalized communities.

How the manifesto is to be used:

Parents, teachers and civil society organizations working together, can work together to advocate to make this manifesto a reality. The document includes the principal *asks* common to all sectors and age groups (the cross cutting *asks*) and the specific *asks* that relate to the specific age groups- early childhood, elementary and secondary education. It further includes the overall *asks*, the specific tangible actions necessary to achieve each of these and the detailed reasons behind them.

As such, it can help activists to have a more informed dialogue on the issues both with political parties and individual candidates across party lines. The networks do not support any individual party or political agenda- we are here to demand the Right to Education of India's children.

More specifically, activists can use the document to:

1. Talk to talk with friends, colleagues and neighbours about our vision for children's education, and distribute this manifesto to others who can take forward the message.
2. Take it to political parties both at the centre and in the states as they shape their manifestoes
3. Together with parents and teachers, meet or write to individual candidates to ask them to pledge their support to this agenda.
4. Hold community level meetings and discuss people's perceptions on school education and record their demands
5. Dissemination to media



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National Campaign on

Right to Education for All (Birth to 18 years)

No Child Labour at All

Right to Education Forum | Campaign Against Child Labour | Alliance for Right to Early Childhood Development