

# NATIONAL COALITION FOR EDUCATION (NCE INDIA)

## CSO SPOTLIGHT KEY MESSAGES ON SDG 4

*Accelerating actions for transformative and resilient education amidst COVID-19*



### INDIA

**Population:**  
1.353 billion  
(UNESCO, 2018)

**2020 Global Index Score:**  
61.9

**2020 Global Index Rank:**  
117

**SDG 4 Dashboard:**  
Challenges remain

**SDG 4 Trend**  
→ Stagnating

**SDG 10 Dashboard:**  
Major challenges

**HDI Value/Rank:**  
0.674, 129 (UNDP, 2019)

**GNI per Capita, PPP:**  
USD 2,130 (WB, 2019)

**Literacy Rate  
(15 years & older):**  
Total: 74.37%  
Female: 65.79%  
Male: 82.37%  
(UNESCO, 2018)

While the Government of India has been making various efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with some progress, challenges remain and stronger government commitment is needed to step up actions to achieve the SDG 4 targets.

The country hosts the largest number of non-literate individuals with 37% of the world's total. Youth and adult illiteracy are highest among rural women, particularly among Muslims, Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe. The funding of literacy programmes remains small and grossly inadequate. The government's current literacy programme, for example, has a meagre budget of only USD 6 per learner per year, inclusive of systems set-up and training. Early childhood education is still not a legal entitlement in India. In fact, half of the country's under-six children are unable to access preprimary education. It is also troubling to note that India has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, with over 34 million children not attending school. Nearly 40% of adolescent girls 15-18 years old are not attending school and approximately 60% of violence committed against children is sexual abuse on girls. A UN<sup>1</sup> report noted that 75% of children with disabilities in India do not attend any educational institute in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Special attention must also be given to address the digital divide which will further exacerbate inequity in education.

The spending level on education is also severely inadequate, with expenditure at only 3.8% of GNP, which ranks India at 122nd place among 158 countries. The lack of regulatory framework and rapidly expanding private sector involvement in education raise concerns around quality and equity. The government's decision to adopt Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models have only exacerbated inequity in education.

NCE India, therefore, recommends the following:

1. Adopt a clear commitment to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as a right, with a strong regulatory framework.
2. Ensure free and compulsory education up to secondary level, consistent with the target under SDG 4 and urgently fill up vacancies of more than 900,000 teachers.
3. Accelerate the expansion of government schools, improve education quality, and address equity, ensuring access of the most marginalised groups and out-of-school children, while decisively addressing the rising commercialisation of education that results to further inequity and segregation.
4. Allocate an additional 1.4% of the GDP for both elementary and secondary education, ensuring adequate and equitable financing of education, particularly given the COVID-19 pandemic that has made resource augmentation to poor areas more urgent.
5. Improve the implementation of the national skill development mission by considering the differential access of women and marginalised groups, and adopt a more transformative pedagogy that includes skills, rights-based information, sexuality education, along with professional training and exposure to opportunities for employment.
6. Adopt a robust policy for adult education, reaching out to the most marginalised rural communities. The Padhna Likhna Abhiyan, the only adult education programme, should not rely on "Voluntary Literacy Educators". This strategy has failed in the past and undermines the need for trained and skilled adult educators who can provide good quality education to adults. The current budget allocation under PLA is extremely low at USD 6 per learner annually, this needs revision.
7. Keep functional literacy as a primary skill and upgrade it with digital to give new sets of capabilities required to adapt to the post-COVID-19 realities.

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Office New Delhi, (2020, March 11). N for Nose: State of the Education Report for India 2019 : Children with disabilities. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/news/n-nose-state-education-report-india-2019-children-disabilities>

<sup>2</sup> Agarwal, K. (2020, May 17). Why 75% of India's disabled kids never attend a school in their lifetime. Retrieved July 06, 2020, from <https://theprint.in/opinion/un-report-75-india-disabled-kids-never-attend-school-in-lifetime/423440/>



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