

India



COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES



Population:	1.393 billion (Worldometers, 2021)
2021 Global Index Score:	60.07/100 (SDR 2021)
2021 Global Index Rank:	120/165 (SDR 2021)
SDG 4 Dashboard:	● Challenges remain (SDR 2021)
SDG 4 Trend:	↓ Decreasing (SDR 2021)
SDG 10 Dashboard:	Major Challenges Remain (SDR 2021)
2019 HDI Value/Rank:	● 0.645, 131 out of 189 (HDRO, 2020)
GNI per capita (PPP\$):	6,681 (HDRO, 2020)
Gini Index:	35.91 (Statista, 2020)
Income Group:	Lower-Middle Income Status (WB, 2020)
Education Expenditure:	3.5% of the GDP, 10.4% of the total budget expenditure (Economic Survey, 2020-21)
Secondary Net Enrolment:	Total: Female: Male:
Literacy Rate (15 years & older):	Total: 74.4% Female: 65.8% Male: 82.4% (UNESCO, 2018)
Out of School:	___ children ___ adolescents- ___ Female; ___ Male

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NCE India in collaboration with partner organisations and the teachers' union celebrate the Girl Child Day, World Education Day, and Fight Inequality Campaign in early 2020.

Civil Society Spotlight Report on SDG 4 for HLPF 2021

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 current pandemic has made the situation worse, bringing in the need for accelerated actions from the government.

India accounts for the highest number of out-of-school children in the world. It also has the highest number of illiterates, one of the highest in child marriage, and ranks 122 out of 158 countries in terms of education expenditure as a proportion of Gross National Product (GNP). The recent pandemic has worsened the situation in all possible aspects. Therefore, the need for the government to focus and accelerate its actions in order to achieve the targets of SDG 4 is urgent.

THE RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN STRUCTURAL MECHANISMS FOR ACHIEVING THE SDGS

The government has exhibited some positive steps to achieve the SDG targets, which includes setting up a structural mechanism for better implementation and monitoring of the Goals. The fact that SDGs are highly interlinked, and implementation and assessment of results often need multi-sectoral focus has led the states to constitute working groups for each of the SDGs, headed by the senior-most officer of the nodal department. The groups include designated officers and



resource persons from all concerned contributing departments. High-level committees have been established at the State level chaired by the Chief Secretary of the State, with all departmental heads as members. In some States, these committees are headed by the Chief Minister. Some states have also created professional units on SDGs in the shape of an SDG cell.¹ At the national level, NITI Aayog is responsible for the implementation of the SDGs.

NITI Aayog, the Government of India's think tank, has also set up the 'SDG Index Report' as a monitoring system. The SDG India Index 2.0 uses a hundred indicators covering 16 goals- barring goal 17 for want of sufficient inputs- and 54 targets. To measure India's performance towards the Goal of Quality Education, 11 national level indicators have been identified, but it captures only six out of the 10 SDG targets for 2030 outlined under this Goal. Of the 11 indicators, four are as basic as capturing the enrolment ratios across all levels of education. The indicators have been designed on the basis of availability of data at the state level and therefore are very limited in nature. All the more, it doesn't even include all the 10 targets under SDG 4.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SDG 4

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on all levels of education and the worst hit are the marginalised groups, particularly rural girls and women, Dalits, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities.

The pandemic has disrupted several ECCE services. The ECCE centres have been closed down leading to interrupted immunisation services, pre-school education and also the nutritional programme which adversely affected the health and education of children. The impact on the school education includes increasing cases of child marriage, school drop outs, and child labour. In India, school closures have affected 320 million students and only 37.6 million children across 16 states are continuing education through various education initiatives, such as online classrooms and radio programmes, etc.² While the COVID-19 pandemic has made online education the buzzword, the stark digital divide in India further increased the inequalities in access to education. According to a GOI survey in 2019, only 24 per cent households have access to the internet, and in rural India, the numbers are far lower, with only 4 per cent households

1 http://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-02/Annual-Report2020-2021-English_0.pdf

2 <https://www.cbgaia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-School-Education-in-India.pdf>



having access. A 2018 NITI Aayog report revealed that 55,000 villages in India did not have mobile network coverage. The emphasis on technology-driven education has alienated many children from the underprivileged sections, preventing them from continuing their studies. The situation has also opened doors for the private players to strengthen their presence in the education sector that increasingly shifted to online learning modes as the preferred option for delivering education.

The impact has also been disproportionately high on the young people. As many as 41 lakh or 4.1 million youth in the country lost jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while construction and farm sector workers account for the majority of job losses, according to a joint report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).³ Students from higher education also faced the brunt of the situation. Several competitive exams have been cancelled, the absence of face-to-face interaction has demotivated children and there are several surveys conducted bringing out the issue of students not willing to continue their higher education. The limited employment opportunities do not provide these children with any alternative either.

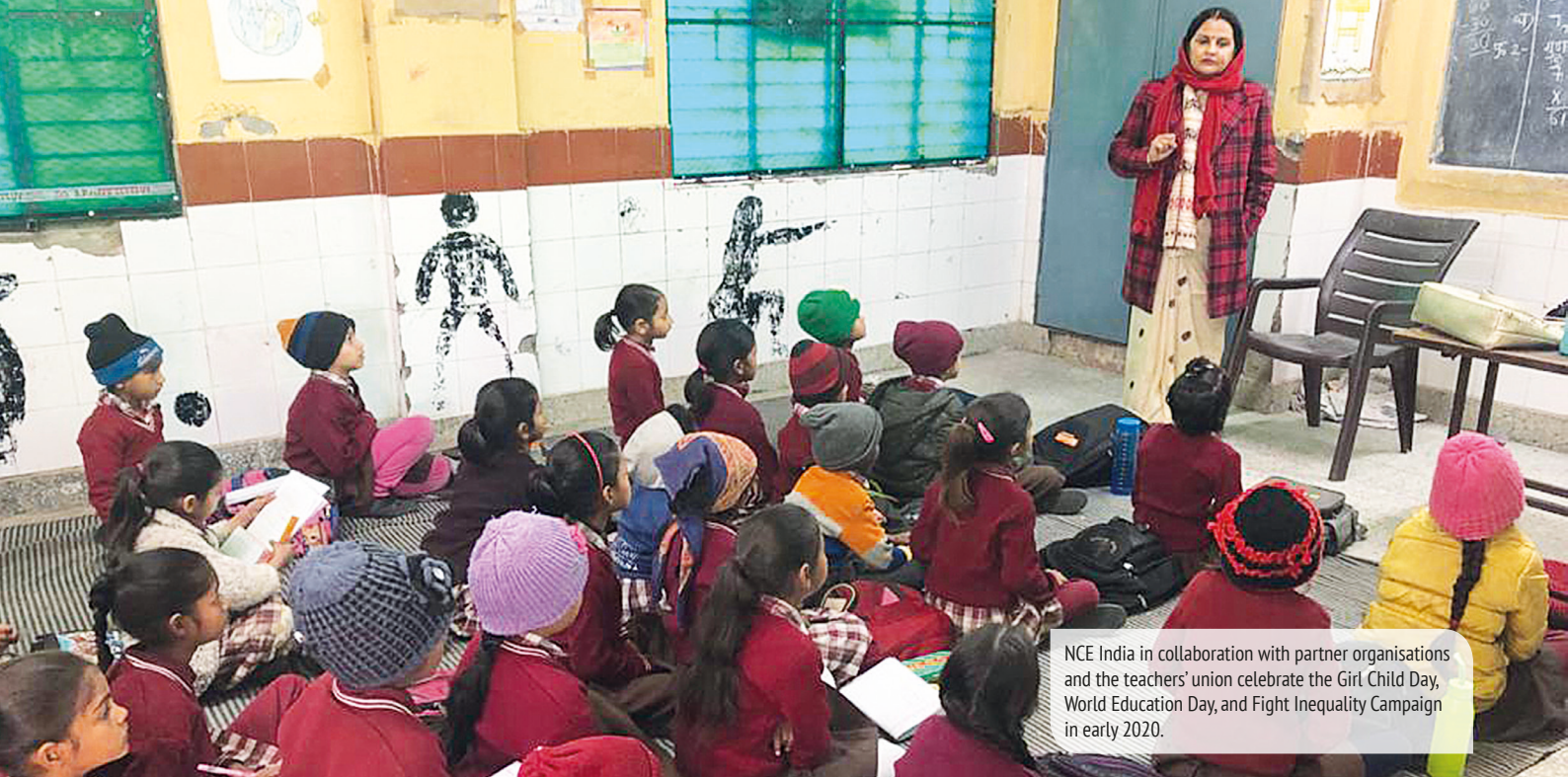
³ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_753369.pdf

The absence of a strong adult learning and education programme in the country has exacerbated the situation. A majority of information regarding the provisions by the government for relief were available online, however, many people, especially women, could not access this information, limiting them from using the relief services provided by the government. Teachers too have faced various difficulties, not just limited to providing quality education to children but several teachers lost their lives on duty. The school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to a million more girls and transgender children dropping out before they complete their education.

Under such circumstances, where the government should have increased the budgets to devise innovative ways, such as the direct benefit transfers to students, of making education accessible to all, the recent budget 2021-2022 has further slashed the education budget by 6 per cent.⁴

The government needs to take urgent actions to improve the current situation of education.

⁴ <https://smefutures.com/union-budget-2021-22-6-cut-in-fund-allocation-for-education-termed-as-rationalisation-by-education-officials/>



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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Education up to secondary level should be made free and compulsory for all learners.
2. The government must undertake a situation analysis of the post COVID-19 impact on education and accordingly increase the budgetary allocation for education to at least 6 per cent of the GDP. Specific budgetary allocations should be made to identify the out-of-school learners and dropouts and mainstream them to school and deliver education based on their contexts and needs. Governments must ensure that gender-responsive education budgeting is enforced to reduce girls' absenteeism and dropping out at all levels of education.
3. The government should ensure that the nutritional programme in schools is accessible to all learners, especially the most marginalised, and wherever possible, dry meals should be provided to children and youth at their homes.
4. The government should prioritise the distribution of learning materials, accessible and inclusive for all children, youth, and adults, particularly learners from poor families, rural and remote areas, religious and ethnic minorities, Dalits, girls and women, learners with disabilities, and learners without access to devices and internet.
5. The government must provide adequate training to teachers on better usage of digital platforms for teaching and also on enhancing the psycho-social well-being of learners during this pandemic.
6. Scholarships and incentives should be increased for children, youth and adult learners from marginalised sections at all levels of education.
7. Adopt a robust policy for adult education, reaching out to the most marginalised rural communities. The PadhnaLikhna Abhiyan, the only adult education programme, should not only 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 is extremely low at USD 6 per learner annually, this needs a significant increase in allocation.
8. Improve the implementation of the national skills 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.
9. The government must enact a central law for the regulation and accountability of private schools. The law should deal not only with the issues of fees but also with quality and equity in private schools. •



Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals working towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, lifelong adult education and learning.

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Started in 2001, the **National Coalition for Education (NCE) India** is a conglomeration of civil society organisations, Teachers' union and Parliamentary Forum working on the Right to Education. The coalition members of NCE have proven records of initiating people's movement mainly in the field of child rights, women, and the underprivileged denied the right to education. The collective advocacy initiatives taken up by the coalition members of NCE India has contributed to the policy changes towards achieving the education for all campaign worldwide. It strives to strengthen the participation of women, children, and other vulnerable groups deprived of elementary education to make education a reality for all. NCE India is a member organisation of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE).