

Recommendations for Education

The manifesto must set concrete, time bound targets and action plans to ensure quality education for all children **with a special focus on education of girls**. Oxfam India and Right to Education Forum, recommend the following three areas to ensure socio-economic and human capital transformation of the country.

Recommendation 1: Universalization of equitable quality education for all children up to the age of 18 years

- **Extend the purview of the Right to Education Act from birth to 18 years**, in line with the internationally recognized definition of childhood, by including Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE), Pre-school and higher secondary education as a legal entitlement. This will ensure achievement of India's commitment to deliver minimum of 12 years of free education with special focus on Dalits, Muslims, Adivasis and girls.
- Ensure measures **to curb commercialization and privatization of education**. Strengthen the accountability of private schools and ECCE centres by drafting & implementing a national regulatory framework that would laydown fee regulation, compliance with quality & safety norms.
- 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 & Regulation) Amendment Act 2016, which legalizes child labour in 'family enterprise'. Allowing children to work, risks violating these children's right to education. It affects the retention rates in schools and increases the dropout rates especially of children from Dalit, Adivasi, Muslims communities.

Recommendation 2: Compliance with Right to Education Act norms

- Ensure **effective implementation of the RTE Act** whose implementation has been dismal with only 12.7% schools complying with the norms, even after 8 years of implementation. The government must draft a roadmap to ensure 100% compliance with RTE norms within 3 years of formation of the new government. **To ensure quality with equity, per child spending on education needs to be progressively enhanced to bring it in line with Kendriya Vidyalaya norms**
- The Union and respective State governments should expedite the process of **recruitment for vacant teachers' positions**, put in place **appropriate mechanisms for pre- and in-service teacher training and ensure proper working conditions of teachers, timely availability of textbooks** and creation of other **infrastructural facilities** to ensure RTE compliance as soon as the new government is formed.
- Ensure that mass scale **closures of public schools are stopped** in the name of merger and **reopen those that have been closed** to ensure the RTE norms are met and schools are accessible to all.
- Ensure **all out of schoolchildren are brought back to schools** and provided quality inclusive education. It is important to particularly plan for the uninterrupted education of girls to ensure their equitable comprehensive development given they are more prone to drop out due to social discrimination.
- Ensure **school safety guidelines** are finalised and **rolled out** at national and states while ensuring budgets for implementation of guidelines. Particular effort will be needed to ensure safety and security of girls, to ensure retention and quality learning of girls up to secondary education.
- Keep No Detention under the Right to Education Act. The recent amendment to the RTE Act risks penalizing students for the system's failure and is discriminatory, exposing children from marginalized communities to disproportionate negative impact.

- The government must invest in strengthening School Management Committees and community participation in education with a view of ensuring social accountability in education

Recommendation 3: Enhance Public Financing of School Education

Given the importance of education in the development of a society and an economy, it is important to ensure inclusive education and sufficient public provisioning for education.

- Take urgent action to reverse declining expenditure on education as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and bring it to **at least 6% of the GDP** in line with the global education financing benchmarks and Kothari Commission recommendations. It is recommended to focus on budget allocation for girl child education especially from Dalit, Muslim & Adivasi communities and dedicated budget for ECCE under the RTE Act. To ensure RTE compliance, the government will require to allocate sufficient financial resources, which cannot be achieved through the education cess alone. Additional funds need to be channelized through strengthening progressive taxation systems. It is important to note that the public spending on education as the share of GDP is the lowest in India amongst all of the BRICS countries.
- The Union and respective State governments should strictly adhere to the recommendation of PAB to spend **at least 30 percent of the funds on entitlements and interventions related to quality initiatives.**