



May 28, 2021

Dear Mr. Pokhriyal,

Subject: Recommendations for effective implementation of National Education Policy

Oxfam India has worked in six states to strengthen India's government schools and to implement the right to education in India, particularly its marginalized communities. Recently, its study on the status of education during COVID was quoted by the NHRC Advisory on Protection of Rights of Children during COVID-19. We have successfully advocated towards improvements in UP (definition of out of schools, improvement of government SMC /SDP modules), Jharkhand (improvement of SMC/SDP modules) and Odisha (MLE policy) among others. Programs on the ground have resulted in improvement of education outcomes, more transparent formation of SMCs and improved school functioning. It has played a critical role in the creation and support to the RTE Forum, India's biggest education network, nationally and in the states.

I am writing this letter to you with the intention of providing inputs and suggestions to support effective implementation of the NEP. On April 9, the Ministry of Education launched SARTHAQ, the implementation plan of the National Education Policy (NEP), which offers an unprecedented opportunity to make much needed reforms to the education system. It makes some welcome suggestions that hold potential of positive impact on the education system in India. With a live dashboard being setup by the Ministry of Education to review NEP implementation from June 2021, this acquires added urgency.

As the implementation of the National Education Policy gathers pace, we hope it will be guided by principles of equity to unleash the true transformative power of education for all children but particularly for girls and those from Dalit, Adivasi and Muslim communities. This is also an opportunity to strengthen the public education system and stem rising commercialization of education. The COVID-19 pandemic risks pushing many children who are out of school. Therefore, along with quality, the policy must continue to focus on universal enrollment and completion of education.

In the **immediate short-term**, we urge you to build in the following recommendations into the NEP implementation plans to support COVID recovery and prevent large-scale dropout of children:

1. Ring-fence funds to protect school education from budget cuts or loss of resources during the pandemic and ensure that additional resources are provided for girls and children from marginalised groups including Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims.
2. To reduce learning loss due to the pandemic and prevent dropouts, put in place accelerated learning programmes and institutionalize a regular process of tracking and review of attendance and identification of children whose attendance is irregular.

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Additionally, we urge you to consider the following recommendations to **strengthen the public education system and uphold the Right to Education Act** as you begin implementation of this historic policy:

1. Ensure that school education remains a not for profit domain and that the regulatory structure being setup for both private and public schools is vested with adequate resources and human capacities
2. Prevent any retrogression of existing RTE norms in terms of quality and equity – the proposal to amend Section 2(n) of the RTE should be reconsidered and emphasis should remain on ensuring universal formal, in-person education at least till age 14
3. Put on hold the process of closure/merger of existing low enrolment schools to allow for their integration in the complex as an alternative to closure in line with the provisions of the policy.

Along with this letter are attached two documents 1) **Covering section**, that offers specific recommendations around each theme in the NEP 2) **Detailed submission**, that has chapter-wise recommendations for the Action plan for NEP.

We hope that the measures suggested in the two documents would be considered during the planning and implementation processes. In addition, we would be happy to meet with you personally to discuss these recommendations in greater detail and also contribute to processes underway around implementation of the National Education Policy.

I look forward to hearing from you.




Regards,

Amitabh Behar
Chief Executive Officer

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