

National Coalition on the Education Emergency

For Immediate Release

As Indian Schools Rush towards “Business as Usual,” National Coalition on Education Emergency Releases Guidelines for Effective Education Recovery

- ***India’s 250 million children returning to school after 18 months of school closures and devastating learning loss***
- ***The NCEE warns that re-opening schools cannot be “return to school” as normal, and lack of a comprehensive approach will deepen the existing education inequality***
- ***Education recovery efforts require a multi-year, radically new approach, NCEE says***

NEW DELHI (November 02, 2021) – The overwhelming majority of India’s 250 million children who are now returning to schools had no regular contact with teachers or structured learning opportunities during the pandemic, leading to an education emergency of incalculable proportions. Yet, state governments are re-opening schools as if nothing serious occurred: students have been moved up by two grades and the normal syllabus is being followed, often after a short remedial course to bring them “up to grade level”.

To help state governments and education professionals address this grave situation, India’s National Coalition on Education Emergency (NCEE) has released “[A Future at Stake – Guidelines and Principles to Resume and Renew Education](#)” along with other essential resources to help with the reopening of schools.

Research has revealed the particularly devastating loss of the most basic language and mathematics skills among children of the rural and urban poor, Dalits, adivasis, minorities and migrant labourers, leading to millions of drop-outs.

“We have wronged our children in a terrible manner,” said **Padmasree Shantha Sinha**, former head of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, speaking at a press conference organized by the NCEE. *“For 18 months, the entire education system has been inactive. Online education has been a disaster. Children have lost the habit of reading and writing. Treating our children’s return to school as business-as-usual would be an irreparable loss to children and their lives and puts India’s future at stake.”*

The NCEE publication argues for ***focusing the education recovery effort on language competences and mathematics competences, adopting a socio-emotional development approach***. This will allow students to make progress across multiple subjects. It means adjustment to the syllabus and timetable to give adequate time to these curricular areas.

“Countries across the world are modifying the curriculum and teaching methods to enable children to re-engage with education, focusing on core competences, and providing extra resources and budgets, instructional time and effort to help the disadvantaged,” said **Sajitha Bashir**, former Global Adviser for Education in the World Bank, member of the NCEE core group and primary author of the publication.

Drawing on lessons from India and globally, [A Future at Stake](#) argues that adopting its recommended approach is both necessary and feasible. It recommends a comprehensive set of actions covering regular coaching and mentoring of teachers; provision of additional learning materials for the re-organized curriculum; back to school enrolment drives; health and nutrition for children; regular and simple two-way

communications with parents, school management committee members, teachers, members of local authorities and other primary stakeholders; proactive management through district education emergency units, and additional funds.

“Catapulting children two or three grades ahead of their initial level without any major adjustment in curriculum or pedagogy does not make sense. The National Education Policy 2020 includes a commitment to simplifying the curriculum, this is a good time to do it,” said **Jean Dreze**, a development economist and visiting professor at Ranchi University.

The NCEE is also compiling and curating [teaching resources](#) to help teachers and educators address the teaching of language and mathematics competences at different grades, as well as to support the socio-emotional development of students.

Education Emergency Policy Tracker

To encourage public awareness and engagement, the NCEE has developed an [education emergency policy tracker](#) to record progress on the ground on key aspects of the education recovery. The first tracker focuses on school re-opening across states by level of education. Most states have prioritized the opening of higher secondary and high schools, while primary schools have remained wholly or partially closed until the end of October. The tracker will also track other key indicators such as the availability of textbooks, learning resources, re-organized curricula, teacher support, and additional funding.

NCEE’s **first survey of high school teachers** in a sample of Karnataka’s schools, including metropolitan Bangalore, conducted in October 2021 showed that only 15 percent of Grade 8 teachers, 20 percent of Grade 9 teachers and about 25 percent of Grade 10 teachers felt that their students were at grade level in language and mathematics. These findings highlight the urgency to address the large gap between students’ learning levels and the curriculum.

“We are planning regular surveys of households, teachers, school leaders and students to collect information on how different states are addressing the education emergency,” said **Gurumurthy K.**, Director IT for Change, and a member of the core group of the NCEE. *“Collecting and reporting data frequently from multiple sources should galvanize public discourse on how to recover from the disaster facing our country.”*

These tools, along with a regularly updated [research compendium](#) will provide resources for journalists to report on the education emergency and recovery process on a regular basis.

“Tens of millions of Indian children are stranded on the other side of a yawning chasm,” concluded **NCEE member Sajitha Bashir**. *“The bridge to cross this abyss is flimsy and is being drawn up too fast. Many of our children risk falling, and most won’t even get on the bridge if we don’t act immediately.”*

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About the National Coalition on the Education Emergency (NCEE)

The NCEE comprises individuals, organizations and networks across the country who have come together in a voluntary capacity to address the Education Emergency and ‘resume and renew’ school education. For more information, visit: <https://educationemergency.net>