

For immediate release
Curfew is lifted ? OPEN SCHOOLS NOW!

January 22, 2022

Schools in Bengaluru remain closed while malls, theatres, pubs and restaurants have been kept open. As of 21 January, the weekend curfew has been lifted as well. The decision to keep schools closed is having catastrophic consequences on children. Schools had only recently started opening after remaining mostly closed since March 2020. Their being closed again spells disaster for children on the academic, emotional, nutritional, social and economic fronts. The impact is maximum for younger children, in terms of malnutrition, child abuse, child labour, and school dropout.

As per the available research studies, the harm from opening schools is minimal. Evidence suggests that young children are least vulnerable to the Covid virus; they are more commonly asymptomatic or have mild non-specific symptoms, and fatalities are negligible. In-school transmission of the virus by children or teachers can be controlled by taking public health precautions, including reasonable physical distancing, wearing masks, regular testing and sanitizing and isolating/ treating cases of infection amongst students and teachers. When this is being done for classes 10-12, why can't the same be ensured for children of classes 1-9? It is tragic that schools are closed when there is no harm compared to their closing.

Moreover, the situation all over the Bengaluru (including Bengaluru North and South Educational Districts) is not the same. Cases may be more in some areas. Closing schools in the remaining areas is meaningless. Therefore, cluster approach to close schools wherever cases are more is the current scientific approach. The BBMP and local self governments need to be empowered to make decentralised decisions.

Across the world, schools have been mostly kept open and in some countries, even throughout the pandemic. In India as well, most governments have kept schools open during the current third wave. The evidence from South Africa and Europe confirms that there is no indication that the third wave is targeting children, which the head of Indian Council of Medical Research has also emphasised earlier. Complete lock down severely affected our economy and jobs. Complete school lock down is similarly seriously harming our children. Opening schools is necessary to reduce this harm and begin the process of learning again.

Let us not ignore the needs of our children and cause further damage that will last for generations. They deserve better than the injustice being meted out to them. We urge the government to consider the harm being inflicted on children and take action by opening schools with immediate effect.

The National Coalition on the Education Emergency (NCEE) has shared school opening guidelines and a research brief with the education department and is ready to provide support in terms of appropriate curricular resources to meet the socio-emotional learning needs of all children.

- **National Coalition on the Education Emergency** (a group of individuals, organizations and networks across the country which have come together to 'resume and renew' school education. The NCEE working groups produce research studies, curricular resources, guidelines for school opening to support governments, teachers, parents and communities to address the Education Emergency).

info@educationemergency.net | www.educationemergency.net

Contact – Dr.Niranjanaradhya.V.P. (94489 86913) Ms. Anusha Sharma(9731999533)