

A BIG PUSH FOR EDUCATION

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Education and related issues

A group of students, who live under the Goshree bridge at Vallarpadam in Kochi attend a class taken by teachers of a nearby school. File | Photo Credit: [The Hindu](#)

On January 24, we celebrated the third edition of the [International Day of Education](#), a day proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly to honour education and its value to humanity and sustainable development. This day provides an opportunity to discuss the importance of education for citizens around the world, and to find ways to advocate for inclusive quality education.

Our theme for 2021, 'Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation', places an emphasis on the way the pandemic has negatively affected learning outcomes for students globally and how we should innovate and combine resources to invest more in education.

Editorial | [Gaps in learning: On rural students and the pandemic](#)

About 1.6 billion students from some 190 countries were affected by the shutdown of schools caused by COVID-19, reversing years of progress in education. In India, more than 1.5 million school closures affected about 286 million schoolchildren. This added to the six million girls and boys who were already out of school prior to the crisis.

According to UNESCO estimates, schools worldwide were closed for an average of three and a half months since the onset of the pandemic. This figure rises to more than five months when localised school closures are taken into account.

Because of dire fiscal challenges and the overwhelming need to prioritise public health and social safety spending, global education financing has been significantly reduced. UNESCO estimates that of the \$11.8 trillion global COVID-19 fiscal response, a mere 0.78% (or \$91 billion) was allocated to education, with \$73 billion spent in high-income countries.

Also read | [Learning in the times of a pandemic](#)

Yet, the governments of South Asia have made some real progress towards protecting education funding. On average, it is estimated that South Asia allocated 0.85% of its fiscal package to education, compared to 0.73% for Europe and North America and 0.69% for Latin America and the Caribbean.

These shifts in public expenditures were mainly driven by Information and Communication Technology measures to support the delivery of education through a mix of radio, television, and mobile technology, as well as the home delivery of printed learning materials for the most vulnerable students who are excluded from technology.

In India, inspired by the release of the National Education Policy (NEP), the Education Ministry has made significant efforts to develop courses to reach all learners via the Internet and the airwaves. The introduction of the NEP and the counter-effects of the pandemic have in fact provided a groundswell of change on which true reform is riding.

Also read | [Education Ministry calls for action plan to stop school drop-outs](#)

Still, much more needs to be done as remote learning remains out of reach for more than 500 million students globally. As we continue to struggle through this volatile situation, it is more than ever our duty to ensure that learning never stops. To highlight the remaining challenges, UNESCO is releasing new global figures now, one year into the COVID-19 pandemic, which show that over 800 million students, or more than half the world's student population, still face significant disruptions to their education, ranging from full school closures to reduced or part-time academic schedules.

The learning crisis brought about by the pandemic therefore represents a clarion call to governments, development partners and businesses to increase funding and make education systems more resilient, inclusive, flexible, and sustainable.

Also read | [COVID-19 is additional layer to 'gender equality in education' challenge: UNESCO report](#)

Now is the time to step up collaboration and international solidarity and place education at the centre of the recovery and the transformation towards more inclusive, safe, and sustainable societies. The pandemic has been devastating but we can also see it as an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to a big push for education across South Asia.

Eric Falt is the Director and Representative of the UNESCO New Delhi cluster office covering Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka

This story is available exclusively to The Hindu subscribers only.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper, crossword and print.

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep apace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Dear subscriber,

Thank you!

Your support for our journalism is invaluable. It's a support for truth and fairness in journalism. It has helped us keep pace with events and happenings.

The Hindu has always stood for journalism that is in the public interest. At this difficult time, it becomes even more important that we have access to information that has a bearing on our health and well-being, our lives, and livelihoods. As a subscriber, you are not only a beneficiary of our work but also its enabler.

We also reiterate here the promise that our team of reporters, copy editors, fact-checkers, designers, and photographers will deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Suresh Nambath

Please enter a valid email address.

To reassure Indian Muslims, the PM needs to state that the govt. will not conduct an exercise like NRC

You can support quality journalism by turning off ad blocker or purchase a subscription for unlimited access to The Hindu.

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com