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Tens of millions to benefit from India's Right to Education Act – UN agencies



Girls learn to read in Bubel village in Orissa, India

3 April 2010 – Three United Nations agencies are hailing what they described as a “ground-breaking” new act that legalizes the right to free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 in India.

The UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) estimates there are eight million children in this age group, mostly girls, who are out-of-school in India.

“Tens of millions of children will benefit from this initiative ensuring quality education with equity,” said UNICEF Representative in India Karin Hulshof.

The Right to Education Act will “propel India to even greater heights of prosperity and productivity for all guaranteeing children their right to a quality education and a brighter future,” she added.

UNICEF, along with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) and the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), pointed out in a [news release](#) that without India, the world cannot reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of having every child complete primary school by 2015.

“This act is an essential step towards improving each child’s accessibility to secondary and higher education, bringing India closer to achieving national educational development goals, as well as the MDGs and Education for All (EFA),” said UNESCO New Delhi Director Armoogum Parsuramen.

The Act is also being lauded for providing a platform to “reach the unreached,” as it contains specific provisions for disadvantaged groups, such as child labourers, migrant children, children with special needs, or those who have a ‘disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economical, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor.’

André Bogui, Acting Director for ILO’s Sub-Regional Office for South Asia, noted the opportunity the Act presents to reach disadvantaged young people such as child labourers. “Considering there is no general minimum age for employment, the Act recognizes that children should be in school which is an implicit recognition that they should not be at work.”

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