

**Address by the Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development at the International launch of the 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report on 9 April 2015**

Distinguished Guests on the Dias; Excellencies' from the UNESCO member countries; Eminent Educationists and Academicians; Senior Officials from the UNESCO, UN partner agencies, Ministries and the State/UT Governments and Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a privilege to be a part of the international launch of the 2015 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) particularly when India-New Delhi is chosen for the first ever international launch of the GMR outside Paris and New York. I would like take the opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to UNESCO for the recognition bestowed upon India.

As the lead agency in charge of coordinating the multiple partners in the EFA movement, UNESCO's role in monitoring the global progress towards the six EFA goals through the annual EFA Global Monitoring Report has been appreciative and I congratulate the UNESCO-GMR for their efforts in making available comparable quantitative and qualitative evidence in measuring the progress towards EFA goals in all the regions of the world. The current theme is most aptly developed, as 'Education for All 2000-2015: achievement and challenges'.

Education occupies a strategic position in India's development priorities. The goal of Education for All has been high on the agenda of the Government of India since the adoption of the Constitution of India in 1950 and the nation's development planning. Article 45 in the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution mandated the State to endeavour to provide free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. Successive development policies have pursued this goal. India's efforts to achieve universal elementary education gained further momentum with the Eighty-sixth Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 and the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 which became

effective on 1 April 2010. The RTE Act, 2009 entitles every child in the age group of six to fourteen years to a right to free and compulsory elementary education in a neighbourhood school.

India, has been a keen and dedicated member of the global EFA initiative and a founder of its E-9 sub group. As a follow-up to the Dakar Framework of Action for EFA, a 'National Plan of Action for Education for All, namely was formulated in 2002 in India, with a view to contextualize and strategize policies and programmes for achieving the EFA goals. We formulated many programmes, the most prominent being the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which is the Indian version of Education for All. These programmes have been implemented through a cooperative federal mode between Government of India and the State Governments/Union Territory administrations, as well as through district level decentralized local bodies.

India has made substantial progress towards the EFA goals, as is brought out in the GMR reports too. Several strategic approaches have been found to be effective in promoting the goals of Education for All, namely the *SarvaShikshaAbhiyan*, *RashtriyaMadhyamik ShikshaAbhiyan* and *Saakshar Bharat*. Mission mode implementation of these programs has accelerated efforts towards EFA goals. Under the strategies of SarvaShikshaAbhiyan, the flagship programme for universalization of elementary education which covers about 1.4 million schools and the National Programme of Mid-Day Meals which provide mid-day meals daily to about 11 million school children, near universal access to and enrolment in elementary education has been achieved. Between 2000-01 and 2013-14, the number of schools imparting elementary education has increased from about 845,000 to 1.45 million and enrolment in elementary education increased from 156.6 million to 198.9 million. The number of out-of-school children in the age group 6-13 years has declined from 13.45 million in 2005 to 6.06 million in 2014. The general average drop-out rate for elementary level has dropped to 4.17% in 2012-13.

Significant progress has also been made in bridging social category gaps in elementary

education. The participation in elementary education of children from disadvantaged population groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities and children with special needs (CWSN) has increased substantially.

Facilitating community involvement in both elementary and adult education programmes has been an important strategy for accelerating progress towards Education for All goals. School Management Committee (SMC) with 75% membership of parents in government and government-aided schools have contributed increasingly to improved schools, community involvement in school activities and participation of local self-government bodies in planning and management of elementary and adult education programmes.

For the first time in India's Literacy movement, Sakshar Bharat, an innovative concept of "Certified Literate", a transparent assessment and certification system has been designed and operationalised in collaboration with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). This practice has spurred demand for literacy, made the outcomes of the adult education programme measurable and significantly enhanced overall credibility of the programme. This system has opened for neo-literates avenues for vertical mobility in basic education. The Sakshar Bharat programme continues to focus on districts with low female literacy.

We do seek to endeavour to improve quality outcomes in education, through the Pade Bharat Bade Bharati initiative, to ensure targeted learning levels in the foundational years of education. Classes I-III, in basic reading, writing, comprehension and basic mathematics all over the country, different models have evolved in addressing this critical aspect. Focus on science and mathematics learning is also now central to school education, where composite and cohesive programmes are being implemented.

Recognising the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, of making Education a pillar for the nation's character building, a new paradigm of education that fosters knowledge with analytical skills, logical reasoning and the ability to imagine beyond the given; that aims at transforming lives by instilling 21st century skills and stimulating lifelong learning, is being adopted. Achieving excellence by improving the quality and relevance of education and enabling all children and young people to achieve expected/specified learning outcomes remains a key goal. Our focus therefore is to build an education system with the highest educational and ethical standards that encourages young people to be productive and socially responsible citizens within a caring, collaborative learning community.

With a view to harness technology for education the use of ICT in Education, introduction of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) as a massive platform for on-line learning have been under taken in a mission mode. Emphasis on skill development for Make-in-India campaign, Quality of Education, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and Initiatives for inclusive education are being accorded high priority. Specific measures for enhancing employability include renewed focus on vocational education from secondary education for more job-relevant skills training in schools. Vocational education has been redesigned to promote diversification of educational opportunities so as to enhance employability and diversified streams in education.

The 2015 GMR provides an opportunity to the international community to put in place a cooperation mechanism to facilitate achievement of the goal of education for all within the shortest possible time period. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate India's commitment to support the global effort to achieve the goal of education for all and promote enhanced cooperation with developed and developing countries for advancing the post-2015 education development agenda. I do

see a great scope for international collaboration to not only complete EFA's unfinished tasks but also to ramp up for the post 2015 challenges by ensuring technical cooperation and exchange of experts in the field of education, especially capacity building and sharing/dissemination of information/knowledge, research, best practices and innovations, relating to education policies and programmes, amongst countries to facilitate the formulation of evidence-based policy options and programmatic initiatives to achieve education development goals and targets.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to UNESCO, UNICEF and other EFA co-convening agencies for leading the coordination of the development of the Post-2015 education agenda, and the development of the corresponding Framework for Action. We must continue to work together to ensure completion of the unfinished EFA agenda and prepare the spring board for the post 2015 agenda. Ladies and Gentlemen, with winds of change sweeping through continents at a rapid pace, it is important that we join hands to ensure that we become a knowledge society in the true sense of the word – that no child remains without access to quality education; and no adult remains without access to basic literacy and life skill development and that we nurture innovation and skill building to enable youth to livelihood skills and foster economic development. The challenge before us is one of commitment and relentless perseverance. I, therefore, take this opportunity to invite all of you to together join hands and strengthen the efforts of the national Governments in their endeavour to realize the dreams of all our children and young people.

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