



## Universal Access to Education: Revisiting Public Provisioning for Children During COVID-19 and Beyond

### Webinar Document

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (Tuesday)  
Time: 3.30 pm - 5.00 pm (IST)  
Link: (Zoom meeting link to be shared)

### Background:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has acknowledged the need for higher public investment towards a holistic education system in the country and recommended universalisation of access to education for 3 to 18-year-old children. It needs to be discussed, however, what is the roadmap suggested for realising this vision. It is also pertinent to discuss whether the NEP offers a comprehensive and coherent framework for addressing the major gaps in public provisioning of education to children, which have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is widely acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare some of the pre-existing fault lines in public provisioning of education in India. The education system in the country has not been able to ensure equitable and effective outreach to children from pre-school to secondary levels over the last six months. The shift from classroom-based teaching to digital teaching has left out a large number of children who do not have access to the infrastructure required for accessing online education. There are also apprehensions that many of the children who have been excluded from school education during the pandemic might never be able to return to schools again; and, even when children return to schools in future, a large number of them would not find a level playing field anymore.

These developments are a harsh reminder of the fact that India needs a holistic, equitable and accessible education system from pre-primary to the secondary level, which in the first place requires a complete overhaul of the policy framework on public

provisioning of education. The NEP 2020, therefore, needs to be examined from this lens of universal access to education for 3 to 18-year-old children.

On the more immediate requirements front, the Union and State Governments need to provide enough fiscal support for ensuring equitable and effective access to education for children. But the prolonged economic crisis in the country and the serious challenges in revenue mobilisation and Centre-State resource sharing imply the possibility of substantial 'budget cuts' for a range of sectors. In such a scenario, it is necessary to 'protect' the already insufficient budgets allocated for provisioning of education to children along with safeguarding the budget support promised for health and other social sectors.

Against this backdrop, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) and Child Rights and You (CRY) are organising a Webinar on September 15, 2020 (from 3.30 pm to 5.00 pm). The meeting will bring together academicians, policy experts, civil society leaders and child rights activists to discuss some of the critical policy issues and practical challenges relating to public provisioning of education to 3 to 18-year-old children during and beyond the pandemic. The insights and suggestions emerging from the discussion will be collated and shared with the Union and State Governments with reference to the processes of revision of budget allocations for the current fiscal year (2020-21) and preparation of fresh budget estimates for the fiscal year 2021-22, which will be underway very soon.

#### **Agenda:**

##### **Inaugural Address**

Praveen Jha (Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

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##### **Panel Discussion**

Venita Kaul (Professor, Ambedkar University, Delhi)

Kiran Bhatta (Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research)

Rajesh Kumar (Chief Executive Officer, Lokmitra)

Protiva Kundu (Additional Coordinator - Research, CBGA)

##### **Open Discussion / Q&A**

##### **Moderator**

Priti Mahara (Director - Policy Research and Advocacy, CRY)

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##### **Closing Remarks**

Asadullah (Programme Director, CBGA)

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