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State of the Education Report for India 2023
**Education to Address Climate Change
SUMMARY**

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Front cover photo

Pre-school children are taught to love and respect the environment on a nature walk. The Planet Discovery Centre, CEE, Gujarat.

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Climate Change**

SUMMARY



Executive summary

To address climate change effectively through education, a fundamental shift in educational approaches is crucial. Until recently, education prioritized conventional subjects, but there is now a growing acknowledgement and acceptance of the urgent need to integrate fundamental aspects of climate change education into the school curriculum.

In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of environmental awareness and sustainability into school curricula and, through the 2023 National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), the country recognizes environmental

education as a multidisciplinary field that has connections to all subjects. Incorporating relevant elements of climate change into education at all stages equips learners and young people with the knowledge, skills, behaviour and initiative to become responsible agents in coming up with climate solutions.

It is also crucial to recognize that policies, no matter how well-conceived, should be translated into tangible actions and effective implementation. While the NEP 2020 and the NCFSE lay a strong foundation for environmental education in India, their success hinges ultimately on the practical steps taken and partnerships built to contribute towards schools and educational institutions across the nation.

About the report



This report focuses on the intersection of two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Quality Education (SDG 4) and Climate Action (SDG 13) – in the context of India, particularly Target 4.7 (Education for Sustainable Development [ESD] and Global Citizenship Education) and Target 13.3 (building knowledge and capacity to address climate change).

This report has been developed for stakeholders in the Indian education sector to serve as a comprehensive reference document for informing policies and initiatives, shaping systemic integration, guiding classroom interactions and inspiring community action in education to address climate change. At the same time, this report also emphasizes, to policy- and decision-makers in the climate change sector, the need to prioritize education as a crucial tool to address climate change and to inspire climate actions with the required knowledge, attitudes, skills and mindset.

This report focuses on the intersection of two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Quality Education (SDG 4) and Climate Action (SDG 13)

– in the context of India, particularly Target 4.7 (Education for Sustainable Development [ESD] and Global Citizenship Education) and Target 13.3 (building knowledge and capacity to address climate change). This report aims to highlight how the interlinkages of these two elements of sustainable development come together and contribute, through designing policies, initiatives and actions, to addressing climate change through education. Using evidence-based analysis, this report demonstrates how systematically integrating holistic climate education from the early school stage to higher education can amplify climate actions and generate climate solutions. It also shows how climate actions in schools, educational institutions and at the community level can mitigate the vulnerabilities of the education system and society. Along these lines, this report explores both the current challenges to integrating climate change into various aspects of education and describes opportunities to address this issue through education.

Finally, this report lists recommendations for concrete action that all education stakeholders in India must take towards realizing relevant and effective education to address climate change in the country.



Above: Young students reuse plastic bottles as pots for plants. ASN School, New Delhi.

Key findings

Education to address climate change in India

This report begins by delving into the context of how India addresses climate change through education. Also outlined are analyses of the various impacts of climate change on the education sector on the one hand, and the role of education in addressing climate change on the other.

Climate change has several tangible and intangible impacts on the overall education ecosystem, particularly in India, caused by increasing heat stress and heatwaves, erratic weather events, climate-induced displacement and migration. These impacts affect learners, their learning environments and learning opportunities, and result in increased health risks for children due to various factors associated with climate change.

The effects of climate change further exacerbate the existing challenges of providing equitable access to quality education in India, particularly for low-income and vulnerable populations across the country. One of the ways to address and alleviate this is by greening education – making education infrastructure and institutions climate-ready and climate-resilient (greening

schools), integrating climate change education in curricula (greening curriculum), training teachers, policy-makers, school leaders and education stakeholders on climate change (greening teacher training and education systems' capacities), and integrating climate change into lifelong learning (greening communities). These are the four pillars of the Greening Education Partnership (GEP), a global initiative towards climate action that was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General at the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022, and to which UNESCO serves as the secretariat. This report analyses India's educational context through the GEP's four pillars, and brings to light the various initiatives and innovations currently in place to promote climate change education.

In India, the importance of climate change education has been recognized and several wide-ranging educational programmes are being taken up to raise awareness and increase understanding of climate change. These encompass policy-level integration of climate education in the curriculum; programmes and initiatives within schools and colleges; development and delivery of teachers' training and resources; awareness campaigns and green-skilling programmes for the youth; and initiatives empowering local communities to

promote climate-resilient actions. Such initiatives are steered by various stakeholders including national and state governments, educational institutions, educators, multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, the youth as well as the private sector. This report features some of these initiatives and highlights several case studies that demonstrate the ingenuity of Indian stakeholders in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

As a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), India also actively works to empower all members of society to engage in climate solutions, as stated under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, which is now referred to as Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE). From an education perspective, this report has compiled the various policy initiatives and government-led programmes in India around the six elements of ACE: education, training, information, awareness, public participation and international cooperation on climate change.

Throughout the country, climate change education is currently included as part of environmental education, albeit in a limited way. India is one of the few countries around the world where environmental education has been mandated in formal education by the Supreme Court through a directive in 1991. Subsequently, this led to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)'s introduction of the subject of environmental studies at the primary education stage as per the 2005 National Curriculum Framework. For students in higher grades, some concepts of climate change were integrated in subjects that were already taught, such as science and geography.

This report also analyses the pedagogical approaches that are more effective in enhancing climate change learning. Such pedagogies make the teaching-learning experience more engaging and deepen the understanding of climate change issues in local contexts, as well as reinforce learners' capacity to take and lead local actions.



Right: Art activities can help teach the importance of practising the 6 'R's. The Planet Discovery Centre, CEE, Gujarat.

Challenges for India

Addressing challenges requires efforts and actions from schools, education institutions, educators and teachers to bridge the gaps and enhance education systems' capacities to integrate climate change.

Given the complexity of climate change, the expanse of India's education system and the existing issues in the Indian education sector, the task of addressing climate change through education comes with its own sets of challenges.

This report points to a range of concerns around education addressing climate change meaningfully – the first of which is defining the purview of climate change education while integrating it in the curriculum, given its overlaps with environmental education and Education for Sustainable Development. It then becomes incumbent upon curriculum developers and textbook writers to ensure that the crucial elements of climate change education and its local contextualization are emphasized and infused in a systematic, interdisciplinary and progressive manner.

There are also gaps in policies at the global and national level, particularly those addressing

climate change without prioritizing education on climate change. This report explores multiple dimensions of the challenges in this regard, covering a range of issues – from gaps in policies, teachers' training and teaching resources, to gaps in curricula, effective pedagogies, assessment and green skills, and gaps in financing and implementation. This requires efforts and actions from schools, education institutions, educators and teachers to bridge the gaps and enhance education systems' capacities to integrate climate change.

The displacement and loss of learning due to climate calamities is also one of the challenges aggravating issues of access, equity and quality of education. Lastly, financing climate change education has been identified as a challenge in view of other developmental priorities for the country.

Opportunities for India

Although there are challenges with regard to climate change education, there are also opportunities to integrate it in the Indian education system. This is possible by leveraging the urgent need to meet India's global climate commitments and national objectives, as well as by building a climate-resilient society that can optimize individual and collective action to better prepare for and minimize the risks and impacts of climate change.

One of the first opportunities to integrate climate change in the curriculum is presented in the forthcoming implementation of the 2023 National Curriculum Framework for School Education, which offers a chance for education stakeholders to update and revise school curricula, syllabi and textbooks across all grades and subjects. This will open up the opportunity to address the challenge of integrating climate change concepts and content in a systematic, progressive and holistic manner across different subjects and grades, by adopting an interdisciplinary approach, local contextualization and systems thinking.

Integration also allows for the possibility of updating and developing pre-service and in-service teacher training courses that can help teachers and educators attain continuous professional development by learning

contemporary topics such as climate change and sustainability.

This will orient teachers towards the various teaching-learning approaches and pedagogies that can be adopted for effective climate change learning. Moreover, the school education system can benefit tremendously from whole-school engagement, such as upgrading school facilities and operations for increased climate safety, adopting sustainability aspects in their governance, and engaging with communities and building partnerships. As a result, school systems will be encouraged to be more resilient, inclusive and conscious of climate-friendly values and attitudes, and to encourage learners to practise what is preached. Besides these initiatives at the school level, the higher education level also holds immense potential for integrating climate change education, one notable example being the recent introduction of guidelines and curriculum frameworks for undergraduate-level environmental education (UGC, 2023).

Finally, this report also highlights issues of empowering communities, reconsidering and preserving traditional knowledge systems, and fostering partnerships among all stakeholders in India to sustain ownership of climate action and advance climate education nationwide.



Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Emphasize the urgent need for collective action to address climate change through education

Several key milestones have served as reminders of India's early recognition of the need to address environmental issues through education, in particular the previous National Curriculum Frameworks (1975, 1988); the establishment of the Centre of Excellence devoted to environment education, and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (1984); and the Supreme Court directive to make environmental education compulsory in India (1991). These landmark decisions acknowledged the role of education as a powerful tool to combat environmental issues, which include climate change.

Today, as the impacts of climate change are escalating, it is even more important to emphasize the fundamental principle laid down by the Supreme Court and to integrate aspects of climate change education in order to form the understanding and instil the values that lead to sustainable lifestyles and collective action on

climate. In an ideal scenario, all individuals should realize the personal or local relevance of climate change and a sense of self-motivation should drive them towards ensuring concrete action on the ground. Some examples of such action include reducing carbon footprints, supporting renewable energy, conserving resources or advocating for sustainable policies.

Given the urgent need to mitigate and adapt to climate change, it is imperative to shift mindsets, change behaviours, and encourage a sense of ownership among educational institutions, policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, the youth and community members. By embracing lessons from our past and reaffirming our commitment to education as a vital tool for addressing climate change, current and future generations can be better positioned to create a sustainable future and manage the devastating effects of climate change.

Recommendation 2

Include a climate change education component in all development policies

Climate change education must be framed in the context of the larger challenge of development that meets the needs and aspirations of all in a sustainable and inclusive manner. This calls for every development-related policy, especially those directly dealing with climate change, to feature a dedicated component explicitly integrating education as one of the strategies in addressing climate-related issues. To realize the potential of education in addressing climate change, it is necessary to prioritize its integration into every development-related policy in India. Climate change is a global challenge that affects multiple sectors and regions, and education is an essential strategic element of the global response to climate change. With its interdisciplinary nature, education can play a pivotal role in empowering all stakeholders, including learners

and teachers, to recognize and understand the causes and consequences of climate change, and equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to take effective action towards addressing climate change. This entails promoting education and public awareness, providing training and capacity-building opportunities, encouraging public participation, ensuring access to accurate climate information, and fostering cooperation among stakeholders.

To achieve seamless integration, education stakeholders, including policy-makers, administrators, the youth, teachers and students, should advocate to prioritize education within climate policies. By doing so, India can cultivate a knowledgeable society well-equipped to address climate challenges across diverse sectors.

Recommendation 3

Integrate climate change education at all stages of education

Climate change education must deliver a positive message of hope and optimism, and addressing the issue of climate change must also take into consideration the development that is the right and aspiration of all nations. To that end, climate change education must appropriately place itself within the larger schema of sustainable development.

It is vital to pursue effective integration of climate change education within the existing Indian curriculum to update learners' understanding of climate change and to stimulate the problem-solving and critical thinking skills needed to generate solutions. Existing education programmes to address climate change and issues of sustainability should be reoriented and contextualized according to different age groups and levels of education, so that these concepts can be introduced and taught with increasing depth and complexity as learners mature and develop their understanding. This approach aligns with the vision outlined in the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes holistic development and sustainability.

Starting at the foundational and preparatory stage, students should develop sustainable habits and learn about the values of conservation and their rootedness in nature and culture. At the middle stage, students should be introduced to interdisciplinary climate change concepts, while emphasizing positive actions and green skills. At the secondary stage, students can delve into specific climate impacts, vulnerabilities, justice and actions, and actively partake in experiential learning. At higher education levels, students should focus on in-depth climate knowledge, mitigation and adaptation strategies, international agreements and the eco-psychological aspects of climate change.

Aligning learning outcomes with climate education across subjects and levels will also ensure comprehensive coverage and highlight the interdisciplinary nature of learning about climate change. This holistic, stage-specific approach will foster deeper understanding of climate change in learners, develop their personal connection to this global issue and motivate their engagement towards responsible climate action and mitigation.

Below: Learning at the foundational stage: children trace tree bark in a fun activity. The Planet Discovery Centre, CEE, Gujarat.



Recommendation 4

Support educational institutions to be green and climate-ready

To safeguard education and prepare future generations for climate challenges, there is a need to transform educational institutions, from schools to universities, into green and climate-resilient environments. This initiative should encompass various aspects, including infrastructure, energy systems, water management, waste reduction, green spaces and disaster preparedness.

By adopting climate-friendly building designs, renewable energy sources and sustainable water practices, institutions can reduce their carbon footprints and showcase environmental responsibility. Creating green spaces with native plants not only enhances biodiversity but also serves to create living classrooms for students to understand ecological concepts first-hand.

Engaging students in climate-related projects fosters practical knowledge and empowers them to become climate-conscious citizens. Furthermore, involving communities in these efforts promotes local solutions and resilience and, more importantly, instils ownership and encourages continuity of action.

This recommendation aligns with national climate goals and educational values, promoting experiential learning, critical thinking and community engagement. It requires policy support, collaboration and partnerships to ensure that every educational institution in India contributes to a sustainable and climate-ready future.

Recommendation 5

Embed climate change perspectives into green skills and vocational education programmes

To meet the demands of transitioning to a green and net zero economy while fostering sustainable employment, it is essential to incorporate climate-change-related green skills into India's education system. This integration should span all educational levels, from primary schools to higher education institutions.

The education system should be responsive to the growing need for green skills and provide learners with exposure and training in areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, water management and conservation, waste management and recycling, electric vehicles, sustainable textiles, agriculture sustainability,

Below: Girls learn to plant seeds during a kitchen garden activity, Government High School, Tamil Nadu.





Right: Teachers' training and capacity-building workshop, Rachna School, Gujarat.

forest and wildlife management, green construction, climate adaptation and resilience, climatic data analytics, eco-tourism, sustainable transportation, etc. These skills should be integrated into vocational education and skill-building programmes.

By promoting green skills and education,

India can prepare its workforce for the challenges and opportunities presented by a green economy. This not only addresses environmental concerns but also helps create a pool of skilled candidates ready for the emerging green jobs market, thereby contributing to India's economic growth and sustainability goals.

Recommendation 6

Empower teachers with comprehensive climate change education training and resources

Teachers play a central role in shaping students' knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding climate change. To effectively address climate change in education, it is important to prioritize the training of educators through both pre-service and in-service programmes. At the same time, integrating climate change education in subjects and activities will create linkages between subjects and disciplines and make teachers more confident about teaching climate change.

Incorporating dedicated climate change education modules within pre-service teacher training programmes will equip future educators with the basic knowledge necessary to effectively integrate climate change topics into their teaching without increasing the burden of having to master another stand-alone and complex subject area. These modules should emphasize the importance of contextualized

learning and enable teaching in innovative ways.

These programmes should also focus on enhancing teachers' abilities to employ age-appropriate teaching methods, engage students in hands-on activities, facilitate classroom discussions and motivate sustainable behaviour. The development of such regular and dedicated in-service training programmes will ensure that existing educators receive accurate and up-to-date knowledge about climate change.

While doing so, it is also essential to ensure that teachers receive instruction and support in a manner that allows them to seamlessly integrate topics related to climate change into their daily teaching, rather than perceiving it as an additional task. Towards this end, teachers should be equipped with knowledge, effective pedagogies and tools that promote a holistic, whole-school approach to environmental and climate learning and action.



Above: Collective action: working as a team to provide irrigation to plants. Sanjeevani Medicinal Garden, Gujarat.

Recommendation 7

Engage with the youth to build a green future

Engaging young people is essential to address the diverse challenges posed by climate change. Undoubtedly, involving young people in decisions on climate change represents a responsibility to engage those whose futures will be impacted. A comprehensive strategy that empowers the youth to become active participants in climate action is needed. This entails supporting youth-led initiatives that address specific climate challenges, fostering climate education to enhance their understanding, and promoting their involvement in decision-making processes related to climate policies.

Furthermore, the youth should be supported through mentorship programmes that provide

the guidance and skills necessary for effective climate action, equipping them with the qualifications required for green employment opportunities. Encouraging youth-led research and innovation can lead to novel solutions tailored to local as well as global contexts. Given India's demographic dividend and diversity, engaging young people across different states, along with their passion, creativity and fresh perspectives, can lead to solutions that cater to the different geographical and contextual needs of a large country. This not only benefits the environment but also empowers the youth to shape a brighter future for themselves and generations to come.

Recommendation 8

Incorporate local and traditional knowledge that supports low-carbon lifestyles in climate change education

In line with India's Mission LiFE initiative and to enhance climate change education, the country requires a holistic approach that strengthens the bond between educational institutions and communities. This approach involves reconnecting with local and traditional knowledge systems that advocate sustainability and low-carbon living. India possesses a wealth of such knowledge, rooted in cultural and ecological traditions, including sustainable resource management, waste reduction and natural resource conservation. If used appropriately, such traditional knowledge could bring fresh

perspectives to modern, scientific practices and understanding, and help secure future ways of life.

Students should actively engage with community members, including farmers, artisans and tribal elders, to learn from their expertise and their past experiences. For example, traditional practices such as agro-ecological wisdom, yoga and water conservation techniques offer valuable insights for fostering sustainable lifestyles. Integrating these local traditions into climate change education can nurture future leaders who will drive climate action while preserving and celebrating the nation's cultural and ecological heritage.

Recommendation 9

Promote partnerships to foster innovations in climate change education

To achieve the ambitious goal of providing holistic climate change education in India across all educational stages, it is imperative to establish partnerships among education stakeholders that foster creative innovations. This collaborative effort should encompass the public and private sectors, school ecosystems (including various education boards, allied institutions, teachers, parents, principals and school managements), higher education institutions, research organizations, think tanks, the youth, multilateral funders, sector

experts, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations.

These partnerships will facilitate the coordination and sharing of resources, funds, expertise and knowledge, ensuring a cohesive approach to climate change education. Collaboration will enable the development of standardized curricula, effective teaching methodologies and teacher-training programmes, and the dissemination of age-appropriate climate information.

Recommendation 10

Strengthen and create education-centred portals to provide reliable information on climate change

Climate change is a rapidly evolving field, necessitating up-to-date knowledge of research, initiatives, strategies, policies and solutions at local, national and global levels. To ensure widespread and well-coordinated access to and dissemination of current and reliable climate change information, India may consider creating new online platforms, while also promoting existing platforms such as the India Climate Change Knowledge Portal administered by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

These platforms should be actively promoted as valuable resources for climate change education for all relevant stakeholders, including

students, educators, researchers and the broader community, as part of a comprehensive policy strategy. These online platforms should maintain updated content that aligns with educational curricula, and provide grade-specific and theme-specific climate change information. They should serve as hubs in which to compile innovative pedagogical methods related to climate change issues, fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment within society. Considering India's diversity, information should also be contextualized and made available in regional languages. Strengthening the effectiveness of existing resources creates a possible way to bridge the gap between slow-to-update textbooks and the dynamic nature of climate change.

Right: Students learning about climate change through cartoons. Rachna School, Gujarat.





UNICEF India's initiatives on Climate Change and Education



Climate change is increasingly being recognized as an important issue in India. There is growing recognition amongst children, especially, on climate change as it is impacting their lives. Education is crucial to promote climate action as it helps people understand and address the impacts of the climate crisis, empowering them with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to act as agents of change. In the recent past, UNICEF has engaged with members of national focus group on environmental education to impress upon the need to integrate climate change elements into the

new National Curriculum Framework (NCF). States will adapt the NCF to their specific contexts and prepare their own versions of the textbooks to be used in schools. UNICEF, in collaboration with state governments, is also tapping into ongoing existing programmes to integrate key elements of climate change. These include school safety programmes, child cabinets, and adolescent and youth platforms at the school level. All these existing interventions are being implemented in collaboration with respective state governments and partners.

The key interventions of UNICEF India implemented with the support of state governments are outlined below:

1 Integration of climate change in school safety programmes

- In Bihar, the Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC), with technical support from UNICEF, integrated elements of climate change in the ongoing comprehensive school safety programme reaching 8.4 million children from 70,000 schools.
- In Chhattisgarh, UNICEF supported Samagra Shiksha in the roll-out of a school safety programme reaching 5 million children with the support of 37,000 teachers in 45,000 schools.
- In Jammu & Kashmir, a comprehensive school safety programme with integration of climate change is being rolled out to benefit 30,000 children and 5,000 teachers in around 1,000 schools.
- In Gujarat, UNICEF supported Samagra Shiksha and GIDM in the development of a self-paced course on school safety and security reaching over 33,000 schools.

2 Adolescent platforms

- In Uttar Pradesh, a children's convention on climate change was organized with the participation of 6,000 children from 240 upper primary and composite schools across 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh. This convention was the culmination of a week-long campaign on climate change.
- UNICEF successfully advocated for statewide upscaling of a climate change campaign by the 45,000 Meena Manch platforms for adolescents in government-run upper primary schools of the state.

3 Curriculum

- In Kerala, curriculum review led to the incorporation of climate change and disaster management measures into state syllabi with the support of UNICEF.
- In Maharashtra, integration of climate and environment lesson plans were developed by the state government with support from UNICEF for early grades to cover 65,000 primary schools and 10,000 teachers.

Way forward

Scale up climate change initiatives and interventions at the state level

Development of learning resources / materials on climate action (digital, non-digital) for teachers and students in regional languages

Develop comprehensive teacher-training courses on climate change including online

Integration of climate change into the new curriculum framework and its roll-out

Develop framework and indicators for greening of schools and support in development of standards

Conduct research studies and generate evidence around climate change

CEE

Centre for Environment Education

The Centre for Environment Education Ahmedabad was established as a Centre of Excellence under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, working in the field of environmental education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). CEE is registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act 1860 vide registration no. GUJ/1043/Ahmedabad, with its registered office in Thaltej Tekra, Ahmedabad.

As a national institution, CEE's mandate is to promote environmental awareness nationwide. CEE develops innovative programmes and educational material and builds capacity in the field of ESD. It is committed to ensure that environmental education leads to action for sustainable development. It undertakes field projects that demonstrate and validate the role education can play in sustainable development. With an extensive network

of over 200,000 schools, it undertakes many school programmes in partnership with different agencies. CEE is also playing a key role in mainstreaming climate change education in the education system in India.

Over the last 39+ years, CEE has worked with various local, state, national and international agencies, organizations and governments in India and in various other countries to help create a sustainable future. CEE works closely with forest departments and others in creating interpretation programmes and facilities. CEE partners with multilateral organizations including many UN agencies, the Central Government, state governments, foundations and corporates through CSR funding, and works in the areas of climate change, rural and urban development, waste management, biodiversity conservation, school education, higher education, circular economy and others.

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Back cover image

Students dedicated to preserving our planet.
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