Submission to the OHCHR High Commissioner's Report to the Human Rights Council, Pursuant to Call for Inputs on Ensuring Quality Education for Peace and Tolerance for Every Child

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Q1. How are governments ensuring that education systems as a whole, their content, structures, teaching methods, curriculum, and ways of delivery, and management:

1. ***are culturally relevant and adapted to local contexts;***
2. ***promote equitable relations, and inclusion, addressing issues like gender inequality, hate speech, and social discrimination;***
3. ***address the needs of all groups of the population; and***
4. ***challenge structural violence and divisions in communities?***

The Indian education system is meticulously designed to establish a rich learning foundation, with Governments of different levels endlessly working to make India a global powerhouse of knowledge. However, it is highly likely that it merely reflects the scenario of the middle class and higher. Schools asking children in their examination's questions such as "*What do you mean by a Dalit*" have sparked debates about the inclusivity status within Indian education. The system might be well-designed and structured for the ones who do not fall under any socially backward category. But does it always reflect the grass-roots scenarios of every child and individual? Problems persist. The government to a certain level acknowledged this pressing issue and recently amended the learning and teaching realm by formally introducing the New Education Policy (NEP), which wholly focuses on aspects of inclusivity in several ways.

Importantly, India aims to be adept at incorporating cultural references in its educational curriculums, which bridge and explain the mainstream way of life while valuing and recognizing

individuals' cultures. Thus, a culturally inclusive and responsive model utilizes people's cultures as examples for learning processes. Under the NEP, it has been included under the SEDGs i.e. Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which is an umbrella term covering gender identities, socio-cultural and socio-economic identities, geographical identities as well as disabilities. Further, the NEP aims to understand and implement stringent measures to ensure school children are not discriminated against in any form, such as being subjected to racial bullying, caste-based slurs, homophobic remarks, and the like. The NEP also systematically seeks to educate India's youth in a language that is best understood by local communities of a state, while including descriptive, thought-provoking chapters on social concerns such as disability rights, and LGBTQ community awareness.

Apart from an inclusive curriculum with a taste of culturally-responsive training, the NEP primarily aims to "teach people in the way they learn best", beating all odds of any mental and physical limitation that persists within a large range of kids. As per UDISE + 2021-22, there are about 22,66,794 children with special needs (CWSN) students enrolled from pre-primary to class XII. The policy encourages the participation of all CwSN students in different levels of education by exposing them to easier learning models. Schools are given better infrastructure and resources to help this segment of students and enable them to excel in all forms of sports and co-curricular activities as preferred by the child.

How are these policies authentically implemented? The centrally-sponsored scheme Samagra Shiksha enables access to school education and supports all States and UTs in implementing the recommendations of the NEP.

Q2. How are governments ensuring that peace education is integrated in a holistic manner in school education at all levels such that content is delivered to all learners, teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver peace education effectively for children, and that curriculums, pedagogy and educational materials are systematically reviewed and strengthened?

India is subject to the UN's emphasis on the mandatory establishment of peace education as a compulsory subject in schools and colleges. However, peace education does not just encompass the act of dodging wars and preventing oneself against them, rather it is the many ways through which people can live in Harmony. In this context, the Indian government, dubbed "Hindu

Nationalist" by the Western media, raises concerns of the minority communities, especially as India shares a long history post-partition, which has since then left communities in widespread unrest. Addressing this unrest becomes a part of the broader goals of peace education in the country, mainly because India has never once invaded foreign soil. The focal point of peace education has come to a stage where it solely deals with internal unrest due to the presence of diverse groups of communities. This unrest is patently visible at all levels, such as political, social, intellectual, and economic. This must be corrected at school levels for a more peace-fostering society. To quote H.G. Wells, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe" and hence, we must educate the youth for peace.

Firstly, India lacks capable teachers who fail to meet the requirements of implementing peace education. Secondly, a mere discussion would not suffice, and lastly, if not a well-structured plan with a well-spelt implementation mechanism, it better not be brought. However, education is a tool that can be molded in one's desired ways. Educators and teachers can perhaps simplify their teaching methods to a more unbiased one, rather than exposing children to their personal opinions. The Indian government could perhaps revise its curriculum as a primary strategy and include a better narrative of the history, not in a manner that sparks hate and controversies, such as the recent acts of the CBSE omitting chapters of Gujrat Riots and Babri Masjid. History must be taught in schools in a way that does not incline to a certain ideology. Sociology books could perhaps include chapters on the peaceful co-existence of all kinds of humans to foster overall societal development.

Q3. How are governments engaging a whole-of-community approach to foster collaborative engagement between diverse stakeholders to ensure comprehensive implementation and avoid duplication of efforts?

The following steps by the Indian Government demonstrates a holistic approach towards encompassing all the stakeholders to ensure comprehensive implementation:

- The **Transforming Rural India (TRI)** initiative promotes community engagement by including the local collectives and panchayats in the decision-making process related to education. TRI has set up "live labs" to test community-driven educational solutions in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. These labs train local women as leaders to support teachers and encourage school engagement.
- Aligning itself with the G20 education priorities, and with an emphasis on multilateral collaboration in the educational ecosystem, the Government of India launched the **Indian**

Education Collaborative (IEC). In order to promote group action for educational change, the IEC seeks to bring together more than fifty organisations, which intends to solve structural issues in education, thereby improving the learning chances for 250 million children. This effort brings together a variety of stakeholders, including governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and educational institutions.

- The **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** aims to enhance local ownership and accountability in the Indian educational ecosystem by universalizing elementary educational needs in the country, by addressing specific educational needs from area-to-area. For underprivileged populations, such as girls and kids with impairments, SSA prioritizes inclusive education.
- One of the pivotal examples of governance transformation in the Indian educational ecosystem by the virtue of data-driven planning and stakeholder collaboration could be **Project SATH-E** in the states of Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh. This initiative intends to improve the learning outcome while ensuring that the quality of education is not compromised.

Q.4 What indicators and systems have governments developed to monitor and evaluate the progress of peace education initiatives and ensure accountability?

Important indicators include attitudes towards diversity, as determined by surveys that measure respect for many cultures, and behavioural measures, such as conflict resolution skills, which evaluate students' capacity to settle conflicts amicably. Knowledge indicators, which are frequently assessed via tests intended to gauge this knowledge, concentrate on students' comprehension of fundamental peace principles including human rights and nonviolence. Metrics of participation monitor community and student involvement in peace projects, including extracurricular peacebuilding activities. There are a number of evaluation methods in place to support these KPIs. In order to encourage the inclusion of peace education in teacher preparation programs and school curriculum, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has created recommendations that highlight how it fits into the larger educational framework. The success of peace education programs is regularly assessed in schools, and input from parents, teachers, and students is gathered to improve methods over time. By offering training and resources that are specific to local circumstances, cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that specialise in peace education improves monitoring efforts on the

ground. Furthermore, it has been proposed to create a Test for Knowledge of Peace Education (TKPE) with multiple-choice questions to gauge students' understanding of these concepts.

Q.5 How have governments demonstrated their institutional commitments and leadership, including through dedicated and adequate resource allocation, as well as through collaborations with the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors to ensure that education responds to societal challenges?

The Government in its budget has specifically allocated funds for advancing education that is inclusive. This funding primarily helps with reaching everyone at the grassroots level- the marginalized and underrepresented, ensuring equitable access to quality education, by providing free resources and materials.

Apart from that, the government collaborates with several UN agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF to implement programs and institutions within the country's territory to foster accessible education. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) was established in collaboration with UNESCO, which focuses on peace and citizenship, along with sustainable development goals, and implements social and economic learning for peace education. The government also reserves certain seats in educational institutes via reservations, which helps in representation. Several scholarships and schemes have always been given out by the state governments to promote education across all communities.

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