

PRESS RELEASE | JANUARY 28, 2021

World Bank Signs Project to Improve Quality of India's Education System



NEW DELHI, January 28, 2021 – The Government of India and the World Bank today signed a \$500 million Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Program (STARS) to improve the quality and governance of school education in six Indian states - Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan. Some 250 million students (between the age of 6 and 17) in 1.5 million schools, and over 10 million teachers will benefit from the program.

The STARS program builds on the long partnership between India and the World Bank (since 1994), for strengthening public school education and to support the country's goal of providing 'Education for All'. Prior to STARS, the Bank had provided a total assistance of more than \$3 billion towards this goal.

"India's National Education Policy 2020 envisages equitable and inclusive education for all. The STARS project will help carry this vision forward," said **C S Mohapatra**, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance. *"It will strengthen early childhood education and foundational learning; facilitate school to work transition through vocational education; improve learning assessment mechanisms; and support teacher development. This will help in the economic and social progress of the country,"* he added.

The agreement was signed by **C S Mohapatra**, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Government of India and **Junaid Ahmad**, Country Director, India on behalf of the World Bank.

India has, over the years, made significant strides in improving access to education across the country. Between 2004-05 and 2018-19, the number of children going to school increased from 219 million to 248 million. However, the learning outcomes of students across all age groups continues to remain below par.

"India recognizes the need to significantly improve its learning outcomes to fuel future growth and meet the demands of the labor market. STARS will support India's response to this challenge by strengthening implementation at the local level, investing in teacher capacity and ensuring that no child of any background is left behind from the right to education," said **Junaid Ahmad**, World Bank Country Director in India. *"Investing more in the early years of education will equip children with the skills required to compete for the jobs of the future."*

STARS will support India's renewed focus on addressing the 'learning outcome' challenge and help students better prepare for the jobs of the future – through a series of reform initiatives. These include:

- Focusing more directly on the delivery of education services at the state, district and sub district levels by providing customized local-level solutions towards school improvement.
- Addressing demands from stakeholders, especially parents, for greater accountability and inclusion by producing better data to assess the quality of learning; giving special attention to students from vulnerable sections – with over 52 percent (as a weighted average) of children in the government-run schools in the six project states belonging to vulnerable sections, such as Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and minority communities; and delivering a curriculum that keeps pace with the rapidly evolving needs of the job market.
- Equipping teachers to manage this transformation by recognizing that teachers are central to achieving better learning outcomes. The program will support individualized, needs-based training for teachers that will give them an opportunity to have a say in shaping training programs and making them relevant to their teaching needs.
- Investing more in developing India's human capital needs by strengthening foundational learning for children in classes 1 to 3 and preparing them with the cognitive, socio-behavioral and language skills to meet future labor market needs.

At the national level, through the Samagra Shiksha, and in partnership with the states of Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan, STARS will also help improve learning assessment systems; strengthen classroom instruction and remediation; facilitate school-to-work transition; and strengthen governance and decentralized management.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goal for education (SDG 4), the program will help produce better data on learning levels by improving the National Achievement Survey (NAS). India's participation in PISA is a historic strategic decision by the Government of India to obtain data on how India's learning levels compare globally. STARS will assist India in this major step forward.

India has successfully achieved gender parity in enrolment in primary education. However, for many children, secondary education is the stage when they leave school and enter the workforce. Under STARS, each state is expected to not only stabilize this downward trend but also improve the completion rate for secondary education.

"STARS will support the Government of India's vision to provide greater flexibility to states for school education planning and budgeting. This will help states' implement evidence-based planning to factor in the needs of the most deprived, strengthen accountability at all levels, and thereby adopt a holistic approach to improve education outcomes," said **Shabnam Sinha**, Lead Education Specialist, and World Bank's Task Team Leader for the project.

The \$500 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a final maturity of 17.5 years including a grace period of five years.

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