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UNICEF EDUCATION

Education Case Study

INDIA

Paving the way for a climate resilient education system

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India is one of the countries most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, ranking 26 out of 163 countries in the [UNICEF children's climate risk index](#) of 2021. Fast-onset hazards such as flooding, landslides and cyclones have repeatedly caused destruction to schools. Children living in drought prone areas with family responsibilities for fetching water struggle with attending school regularly, and limited availability and quality of water at schools remain key concerns. Excessive heat and air pollution, which share causes with climate change, negatively impact the health of children in India, further hindering school attendance and learning outcomes.

To address these issues, the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia published a report in 2022, [The Heat is On](#), along with a specific study on [India](#) focusing on the flood-affected states of Bihar, Kerala and Odisha. Building from this evidence, UNICEF has engaged with members of national focus group on environmental education to integrate climate change elements into the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF). Once finalised, states will adapt the NCF to their specific contexts and prepare their own versions of the textbooks to use in schools.

UNICEF is also tapping into pre-existing programmes to integrate key elements of climate change. These include school safety programmes, child cabinets, adolescent and youth platforms at the school level such as *Meena and Raju* for girls and boys to converse openly on topics such as climate change, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities to enhance awareness and knowledge around climate change preparedness and resilience.

RESULTS

- In Uttar Pradesh State, UNICEF helped organise a children's convention on climate change with participation from 6,000 adolescents of *Meena and Raju* platforms from various schools. This provided an opportunity for children to present their charter of demands on climate

change to the Government of Uttar Pradesh. This programme is now scaled up in all Meena and Raju platforms, reaching 45,642 schools and benefitting 4.7 million adolescents.

- In Bihar State, UNICEF is supporting the Government to roll out a [comprehensive school safety programme](#) that includes climate change elements, covering all government and private schools and reaching 22 million children. UNICEF also helped adapt the [Safe Saturday](#) concept, a component of school safety which aims to build knowledge and skills so that children are better prepared to confront climate issues and disasters with confidence. Moreover, UNICEF has supported the training of 349,490 elementary school teachers and 35,121 secondary school teachers on DRR and climate change from all 38 districts.
- In [Maharashtra State](#), successful advocacy led to the integration of climate action and environment lesson plans for first and second grade curricula covering 65,000 primary schools across the state, with plans to build the capacity of 100 master trainers and 10,000 schoolteachers through related trainings.
- In [Kerala State](#), UNICEF collaborated with the general education department to organise a five-day curriculum review, resulting in the incorporation of climate change and disaster management into their state syllabi.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Schools are vital spaces to create and implement environmental and climate solutions.** Schools provides a significant opportunity to integrate elements of climate

change in pedagogical, classroom and school activities that enhance students' knowledge, attitudes and ability to raise awareness around climate actions. The curriculum and policy could provide the enabling environment for schools to bring the required change.

- **Effective climate change education requires well trained and motivated teachers.** Well trained teachers, who are committed to integrating environmental education and climate action into their lessons, can successfully raise awareness, help change attitudes and behaviours and support students to become part of the solution.
- **Listen to the voices of children for better knowledge, awareness and action.** Children and adolescents can be leaders of change and help transform policy. Providing opportunities for children to understand the issues and challenges of climate change can spur action at the community level with the support of local governments.

NEXT STEPS

UNICEF is working with the National Council of Educational Research and Training to develop a comprehensive training course—available online and in person—for teachers on climate change, which will be completed by the end of the year. In partnership with ministries and other sectors like protection, UNICEF is also organising learning courses for youth to raise awareness and encourage action around climate change. Additionally, UNICEF is preparing resources like modules, online courses for teachers, web applications and games on climate action in local and state languages to better orient teachers and students.

Cost effectiveness: In Bihar Province, UNICEF has contributed US \$90,000 since 2021 towards overall comprehensive school safety programmes, which feature elements of climate change, and towards supporting the Government in developing modules and teacher trainings benefitting about 22 million children. In Uttar Pradesh Province, UNICEF has contributed US \$28,000 since 2022 on climate change and education, benefitting 4.74 million adolescents.

For more information, please contact:

UNICEF India Country Office: newdelhi@unicef.org
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