

help to easily introduce local arts, languages, crafts, etc. into the curriculum, support the local arts, and will also encourage prominent persons from the community to come share their knowledge with students and inspire them.

- P5.5.4. Closing down substandard standalone teacher education institutions:** The process of reviewing the performance of teacher education institutions, and closing down the corrupt or substandard ones will be immediately initiated through mandatory accreditation of all TEIs as multidisciplinary HEIs within the next 3-5 years. A sound legal strategy to weed out poorly performing programmes and shutting them down will be put in place by the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA) (see [Chapter 23](#)), in collaboration with the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA). Promoters of such institutions will be free to put their infrastructure to other productive uses, such as for vocational education. See also [Section 16.1](#).
- P5.5.5. Pedagogical aspects of the four-year integrated B.Ed. programme:** In addition to multidisciplinary knowledge, and specialised subject content as chosen by the student, the pedagogical aspects of the four-year integrated B.Ed. programme will consist of integrated theory and practice. Teachers-in-training will learn about learning-centred and collaborative learning strategies and they will be taught techniques to simultaneously teach students at multiple levels. Their courses will include diversity training - regarding how to enable underserved groups to thrive - ranging from women to socio-economically disadvantaged to differently-abled students. Trainees will use these teaching methods during their practice teaching so that they gain experience in their respective classes. Projects, rubrics, portfolios, concept maps, and mock classroom observations will replace or significantly supplement written tests, so that continuous assessment of higher order objectives will become the norm.
- P5.5.6. Specialist teachers:** There is an urgent need for additional special educators for certain areas of school education. Some examples of such specialist requirements include subject teaching for CWSN at the Middle and Secondary school level, education of children with singular interests and talents, and teaching for specific learning disabilities. Such teachers would require not only subject-teaching knowledge and understanding of subject-related aims of education, but also the relevant skills for and understanding of such special requirements of children.

While the generalist special educator is competent to work across the primary school subject areas and can also support and complement a subject teacher in middle or high school, a special educator will not himself/herself have adequate knowledge to undertake subject teaching at higher levels of school. Similarly, education of children with singular interests and talents is best prepared for after a teacher has accumulated work experience. Therefore, such areas could be developed as secondary specialisations for subject teachers or generalist teachers, after initial or pre-service teacher preparation is completed. They will be offered as certificate courses, in the in-service mode, either full time or as part time / blended courses - again, necessarily, at multidisciplinary colleges or universities.

Chapter 6

Equitable and Inclusive Education

Objective: Achieve an inclusive and equitable education system so that all children have equal opportunity to learn and thrive, and so that participation and learning outcomes are equalised across all genders and social categories by 2030.

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. Unfortunately, prejudice and bias, based on gender, social and economic status, and special needs, among other factors, often affect people's capacity to benefit from the education system, compounding social cleavages that hold the nation back from growth, innovation, and progress. This Policy aims to shape an education system that benefits all of India's children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth or background.

Data shows that, over the last three decades, the Indian education system and successive government policies have made steady progress towards bridging gender and social category gaps in all levels of school education. However, large disparities still remain, especially at the secondary level, particularly for groups that have been historically underrepresented in education.

URGs in education can be broadly categorised into those having given gender identities (including women and transgender individuals), given socio-cultural identities (such as SC, ST, OBCs, Muslims, migrant communities), given special needs (such as learning disabilities), and given socio-economic conditions (such as the urban poor). While overall enrolments in schools

decline steadily from Grade 1 to Grade 12 - a problem which must be addressed across the country as discussed in [Chapter 3](#) - this decline in enrolments is considerably more pronounced for many of these URG. According to U-DISE 2016-17 data, about 19.6% of students belong to SC at the primary school level, but this fraction falls to 17.3% at the higher secondary level. These enrolment drop-offs are even more severe for ST students (10.6% to 6.8%), Muslim students (15% to 7.9%), and differently-abled children (1.1% to 0.25%), with even greater declines for female students within each of these URG. The declines in URGs enrolment in higher education is even steeper.

These statistics make it clear that inequities affect children already in primary school. Actions must be taken urgently to understand the barriers students face and to implement proactive measures ensuring inclusive and equitable participation of children from URGs across all levels of school education, beginning in a child's early years. This will, in particular, also help ensure that all children will be a part of an inclusive and equitable society when they grow up, which in turn will raise the peace, harmony, and productivity of the nation.

What causes exclusion and discrimination in education? A first basic cause for the exclusion of URGs from the education system is that children from URGs often suffer from a **lack of access to schools**, especially quality schools. Despite the dramatic leap in access to schooling over the past decade, there remain very serious barriers to access to early childhood and secondary education - especially for areas with large populations from educationally underrepresented groups (see [Chapters 1 and 3](#)).

The problem does not end at access, however. Even when a child from a URGs does succeed in accessing and entering a quality school, a number of other factors can and often do come into play that create barriers to learning, which in turn lead to low attendance, poor learning outcomes, and higher rates of dropping out. Indeed, there is a complex web of discriminatory and exclusionary practices and realities, due to various economic, social, political, and historical factors, that often lead to such barriers.

Poverty plays a major role in both exclusion and discrimination. Poor families struggle to send their children to school (even when there is access), and to provide support for their schooling when they do. Children from poorer homes often also suffer nutritional deficiencies that have a direct impact on learning. The lack of quality infrastructure, functional and secure toilets, and safe drinking water in schools in poorer areas represents a severe form of discrimination in education for children from socio-economically disadvantaged communities. The lack of good libraries, laboratories, and learning supplies at school hits children from disadvantaged communities the hardest, as they generally will not have as many educational resources at home.

Social mores and biases also contribute in a serious way to discriminatory practices; for example, many communities believe that girls need not go through formal schooling. Historical discrimination against various groups in our society has had a strong corresponding harmful impact on the practice of education as well, e.g. differential classroom seating based on caste, or only girls doing domestic chores in school. A longer-term consequence of this kind

of systemic bias and discrimination that children witness in school is that many of these groups then remain underrepresented and discriminated against when they grow up and join the professional education community as teachers, school leaders, and educational functionaries, creating a vicious cycle of discrimination.

Finally, school **curriculum and textbooks** often also play a role. For some communities, the connection between formal schooling and their own lives is unclear, e.g. in cases of exclusionary curricula that do not refer to what is familiar, valuable, or relatable to them. Indeed, any analysis of the existing curricula, pedagogy or textbooks exhibits a biased picture of life where the view of the “powerful” prevails: for example, the earning member of a family is almost always male in our textbooks; names of children in stories might not reflect all communities; there are almost no references to people that are differently-abled. Thus many of our classroom processes do not welcome or encourage children from disadvantaged or underrepresented communities.

What can be done to work towards and thereby attain full equity and inclusion in schools? The critical problems and Policy actions regarding early childhood education, foundational literacy/numeracy, and access/enrolment/attendance discussed in [Chapters 1-3](#), respectively, are well-established to be particularly relevant and important for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups; therefore, **the measures from Chapters 1-3 must be targeted in a concerted way for URG.**

In addition, there have been various successful policies and schemes implemented over the past several years (such as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to incentivise parents to send their children to school, providing bicycles for transport, etc.) that have significantly increased participation of URGs in the schooling system in certain areas. **These successful policies and schemes of past years must be renewed and significantly strengthened for URGs across the country.**

It will also be essential to **take into account research that ascertains which measures are particularly effective for certain URGs.** For example, providing bicycles and organising cycling and walking groups to provide access to school have been shown to be particularly powerful methods in increasing participation of female students - even at lesser distances - because of the safety benefits and comfort to parents that they also provide. One-on-one tutors and open schooling can be particularly effective for certain CWSN. Schools having quality ECCE reap the greatest dividends for children who come from families that are socially or economically disadvantaged. Meanwhile, the hiring of social workers and counsellors that work with and connect students, parents, schools, and teachers in order to improve attendance and learning outcomes have been found to be especially effective for children in urban poor areas.

Data shows that certain geographical areas contain significantly larger proportions of URG. Thus, this Policy states that **certain regions of the country with large populations from URGs should be declared Special Education Zones (SEZs), where all the above schemes and policies are**

implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts and funding from the Centre and States in order to truly change the educational landscape of these Zones.

It must be noted that women cut across all URG, making up about one half of all other URGs - unfortunately, the exclusion and inequity that URGs face are only amplified for women. The Policy additionally recognises the special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social mores - not only in their own generation but in the next one; therefore, providing a quality education to girls in URGs is the best way to increase the education levels in these URGs not just in the present but also in future generations. The Policy thus states that **the policies and schemes designed to uplift students from URGs should be especially targeted towards the girls in these URGs.**

All the above policies and measures are absolutely critical to attaining full inclusion and equity for all URGs - but they are not sufficient. What will also be required is **a change in school culture.** All participants in the school education system, including teachers, principals, administrators, social workers, counsellors, and students, will need to be sensitised to the requirements of all students, the notions of inclusion and equity, and the respect and dignity of all persons. Such an educational culture will be the best tool to help students become empowered individuals who, in turn, will enable society to transform into one that is responsible towards its most vulnerable citizens. Inclusion and equity will become a key aspect of teacher education (and training for all leadership, administrative, and other positions in schools); efforts will be made to recruit more high quality teachers and leaders from URGs in order to bring in excellent role models for all students.

Finally, students will be sensitised through this new school culture brought in by teachers and other school workers (such as social workers and counsellors), and also by **corresponding changes in the school curriculum.** The school curriculum will include material on human values such as respect for all persons, empathy, tolerance, inclusion, and equity early on; any biases in school curriculum will be removed, and more material will be included that is relevant and relatable to all communities, and which develops these human values.

6.1. Upliftment of underrepresented groups in education

This Policy envisages concerted and intensified policy efforts to support all such URGs in school education. In this section, policy initiatives for inclusion and equity that are critical to all URGs are described. In subsequent sections, policy initiatives that are specific to, or that need strengthening for, particular URGs will be discussed.

- P6.1.1. Emphasis on the Policy actions of Chapters 1-3 for students from underrepresented groups:** The critical educational issues raised in Chapters 1-3, relating to ECCE, foundational literacy/numeracy, and school access/enrollment/attendance, are often especially relevant for students from URG. The Policy actions in Chapters 1-3 will thus receive targeted attention and support for students from URG.

Special Education Zones will be set up in disadvantaged regions across the country.

- P6.1.2. Establishment of Special Education Zones:** Special Education Zones will be set up in disadvantaged regions across the country. It is known that there is inequitable development across regions - even within States that are otherwise performing better than the national average on human development indicators. Data reveals that there are significantly higher proportions of students from URGs in certain geographical areas. States will be encouraged to declare any clearly definable area as a SEZ on the basis of clear social development and socio-economic indicators (e.g. tribal districts of Madhya Pradesh).

The Central government will support extra investment and per-child expenditure in the ratio of 2:1 for each rupee spent by the State in these Zones. These extra investments will be spent on multiple aspects required for improving educational outcomes in these regions, including implementation of the Policy laid down in Chapters 1-3 as well as in this chapter; in particular, infrastructure, learning resources, and teacher capacity will receive targeted support in these regions. Other innovative educational initiatives will also be piloted in these zones, and will be closely monitored and adjusted based on outcomes.

The key idea will be to have these Zones act upon all the Policy actions for the upliftment of URGs in a concerted manner, with close joint monitoring by the Centre and the State, in order to quickly enable substantial positive differences in the areas of the country that truly need it most.

- P6.1.3. Availability and capacity development of teachers:**
- a. **Inclusive education in teacher preparation:** Inclusive education will be an integral part of both pre-service teacher education as well as in in-service professional development, including for Anganwadi workers, pre-school and school teachers, school leaders, and other education functionaries. These programmes will ensure that all teachers are continuously

- sensitised about different learners and hence will be able to cater to the educational needs of all learners, particularly from URGs and including those with certain disabilities, developmental delays or trauma who require additional attention. States and districts will develop customised training modules based on their specific contexts. Universities will be encouraged to offer certificate courses on topics related to equity and inclusiveness, and teachers will also be encouraged to undertake such courses.
- b. **Alternate pathways for recruitment of teachers from URG:** To address the underrepresentation of teachers from URG, alternate pathways for the recruitment of high-quality teachers from URGs will be developed. Such efforts will include a “recruitment followed by training” model (instead of the typical “training followed by recruitment” model) for teachers from URG.
 - c. **Pupil-Teacher Ratio:** PTR in schools with a high proportion of learners from URGs should not be more than 25:1. This ratio is keeping in mind the remedial measures and bridge activities that will be required at every such school on a continuous basis until such time that the gaps are bridged.

Inclusive education will be an integral part of both pre-service and in-service teacher education.

P6.1.4. Creation of inclusive school environments:

Establishing mechanisms to address discrimination, harassment and intimidation: Admissions processes that go against the spirit of inclusivity will be abolished, and institutional processes (including time-tables and academic calendars) will reflect the diverse needs of learners and their communities. Schools will define and enforce rules and regulations to ensure privacy, dignity, safety, and access to all school resources, activities, and events (including sports and self-defense classes) for learners from URG.

- a. **Eliminating exclusionary practices:** Clear criteria on equity and inclusiveness will be laid down that schools will be expected to follow. Criteria for assessing equity and inclusiveness of all schools will be developed and given adequate weight during accreditation or self-evaluation processes.
- b. **Sensitising learners:** All students will develop sensitivity and appreciation of the diverse cultures and traditions to which we belong. A concerted set of actions on various fronts will be implemented, e.g. through inclusion of narratives around different socio-economic situations in the curriculum, questioning simplistic labeling of individuals on the basis of their community or beliefs, etc. Basic human values of tolerance, inclusiveness,

equity, empathy, helpfulness, service, etc. will be incorporated throughout the curriculum.

- c. **Inclusive curriculum:** School curricula, syllabi and teaching learning materials (especially textbooks) will be reviewed to identify and remove overt or hidden bias and stereotyping. In all curricular reform, a concerted effort will be made to mainstream issues related to URGs in curricula for school education as well as for teacher development programmes.

In schools with a high proportion of learners from underrepresented groups, PTR should not be more than 25:1.

P6.1.5. Maintenance of databases: Up to date information for each student will be maintained in the National Repository of Educational Data (NRED). While some education indicators will be common to all URGs, specific indicators may be tracked for particular groups. National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) will devise an appropriate mechanism to track students from educationally URGs. The use of tools to capture and analyse data of URGs will enable effective monitoring of the progress of children from URGs in school education. The Central Educational Statistics Division (CESD), which will be set up within NIEPA, will undertake the analysis of this data in order to facilitate the design and delivery of targeted initiatives.

P6.1.6. Financial support to individual students:

- a. **Targeted scholarships:** A special National Fund will be created specifically for providing scholarships and developing resources and facilities for students from URG. Students will be able to apply for financial support in a simplified manner - from a single national agency or a “single window” system - and will be able to register complaints if they are denied due support or services. Additionally, data will be linked to the NRED to ensure that no student is denied due support or resources, while also ensuring that the privacy and dignity of students are always respected.
- b. **Alternative means of support:** Besides scholarships, other means of support may be made available, e.g.:
 - Recruitment of talented and meritorious students from URGs to participate in NTP and RIAP programmes as educational role models, tutors, and instructional aides.

- Breakfast (in addition to midday meals), particularly for learners in economically-disadvantaged areas, following similar quality standards as for midday meals.
- Special internship opportunities under various departments concerned with the development of URG.

Admissions processes and institutional processes (including time-tables and academic calendars) will reflect the diverse needs of learners and their communities.

P6.1.7. Targeted funding and support for inclusion and access to districts and institutions:

- a. District-wise financial assistance:** Provision of financial assistance for initiatives related to inclusion and access will be made to districts identified as special focus districts for implementing context-specific and targeted interventions/strategies, including strengthening of infrastructure. District-wise financing will be accompanied with autonomy to the districts to spend funds on aspects identified by the respective district stakeholders and based on their specific needs.
- b. Adequate financial and other resources for institutions:** Institutions serving the educational needs of students from URGs will identify specific needs; initiatives to address these needs will be backed by adequate financial resources by the system (e.g. additional teacher recruitments from the respective communities, translated material catering to the needs of specific URG, social workers to appraise the concerned community and build awareness among its members on school education, etc.)
- c. Funding will be made available for independent research on inclusive education:** This will include teacher development and impact evaluation studies of all schemes related to the promotion of inclusive education and the identification of causes for dropouts and poor educational outcomes, particularly of learners from URG, and initiatives to address these issues.

P6.1.8. Coordinated and integrated policy implementation to support underrepresented groups: There will be a focused approach and carefully planned synergy among all efforts towards increased participation of URGs in school education. While the ultimate responsibility for ensuring equitable educational opportunities lies with the Ministry of Human Resource

Development and relevant State/UT-level Departments/Ministries of Education, an enabling ecosystem for participation of members of URGs will be created (e.g. by specific Ministries dedicated to empowerment of specific groups, health and nutrition in early years, transport facilities, etc.).

A special National Fund will be created for providing scholarships and developing resources and facilities for students from underrepresented groups.

6.2. Education of girls as a cross-cutting theme

Indian society has long upheld the high status of women and girls and the importance of girls' education. Early history dating back thousands of years indicates the preminent role women played as leaders in politics, defense, religion, literature as well as the fabric of Indian society.

Girls' access to education is the clearest path to disrupt poverty and violence, promote community health and well being, and foster development dividends that carry on into the next generation. Thus a key strategy in uplifting Indian society is to give concerted attention to uplifting women and girls; and a key strategy in uplifting URGs is to give due attention to uplifting the women in these groups.

For all these reasons, and in order to achieve gender equality in education, the Policy aims to integrate gender as a cross cutting priority for all aspects of policy implementation. Key efforts will include:

P6.2.1. Partnerships with States and community organisations for girls' education:

The Government of India will develop a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide quality and equitable education for all girls, focusing on five pillars:

- a. Ensuring 100% participation of girls in the schooling system and a high participation rate in higher education;
- b. Closing gender gaps in educational attainment at all levels;
- c. Changing mindsets and halting harmful practices to foster gender equity and inclusion;
- d. Inculcating girls' capacity for leadership to help develop current and future role models; and

- e. Improving dialogue with civil society to exchange best practices and lessons learned.

The fund will authorise two funding streams - formula and discretionary grants. Formula grants will be available to States to implement priorities determined by the central government critical for assisting women and girls in gaining access to education (such as the provision of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers etc.).

Discretionary funds will enable States to support and scale effective community-based interventions that address localised and context-specific barriers to girls' access to and participation in quality education. Discretionary funds will be directed towards underfunded educational challenges facing women and girls at the community level based on a comprehensive independent-needs assessment. A portion of discretionary funds will be used to conduct due diligence on community-based organisations and to provide them with targeted technical assistance to enhance their capacity to deliver programming. States that receive resources through the fund will detail out their plan to consult civil society as a component of its efforts to close the gender gap in education.

A Gender-Inclusion Fund will focus on supporting quality and equitable education for all girls.

- P6.2.2. Fostering women's participation and leadership in education:** Resources will be made available to increase the number of women in positions of leadership in schools, including but not limited to institutional heads, teachers, hostel wardens, health workers, security guards, and sports instructors. To facilitate the hiring and retention of women in education, the amended Maternity Benefit Act will be implemented to provide crèche facilities for educators. By focusing on leadership development, incentive programmes, teacher education, recruitment and retention efforts, these initiatives will ensure women play a leading role in children's education.

To address the gender imbalance among school teachers (especially in some rural schools), alternate pathways for female teacher recruitment will be developed, without compromising on merit and qualification, both educational and professional. For example, in rural and remote areas with low proportions of female teachers, scholarships will be offered to the best female students and IAs of that area to enter outstanding teacher education programmes and become teachers, and efforts will be made to preferentially employ them in these areas after they complete their education.

- P6.2.3. Prioritising school safety and security:** All schools will develop credible mechanisms to ensure schools remain discrimination-, harassment-, and

intimidation-free, especially for women and girls. Guidelines for ensuring school safety and security of girls will be developed and made a part of the eligibility conditions for institutional accreditation. This framework will include mandatory training for educators and administrators on efforts to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence. Working female-only toilets with a regular stock of menstrual hygiene products will be constructed and available.

Girls' safety outside of school is also recognised as critical to their attendance and overall educational attainment; unfortunately, transportation to and from school can sometimes infringe on their personal safety in some areas. Efforts will be made to ensure girls benefit from initiatives that promote access to safe and reliable transportation, including bicycle access programmes.

All schools will develop credible mechanisms to ensure that they remain free of discrimination, harassment and intimidation especially for women and girls.

P6.2.4. Addressing social mores and gender stereotypes that encourage school non-attendance: As part of an ongoing effort to identify and eliminate gender stereotypes in society, especially those that encourage withdrawal from schools, schools and social workers will hold regular discussions with parents, e.g. on social issues like child marriage, not sending girls to high school or for further studies, placing financial expectations on boys pre-maturely, forming negative perceptions around women employment, involving school-going children in the family profession or household work, and in general, according external factors precedence over formal education. The importance of formal education in securing better positions in medium- to high-productivity jobs and attaining financial independence will also be stressed. In addition, the presence of strong role models, e.g. female teachers, as in P6.2.2, will help change societal perceptions about women's abilities and ambitions.

P6.2.5. Gender sensitisation in schools: All educational institutions and affiliated offices will be mandated to conduct awareness sessions on gender issues to break stereotyped gender roles, on the importance of harassment-free environments and equal treatment of genders, and on legal protections and entitlements for girls and women including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, the Maternity Benefit Act (along with its Amendment), and the Sexual

Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. Training will aim to raise teachers' and educational administrators' awareness of gender-sensitive and inclusive classroom management.

- P6.2.6. The importance of focusing on girls from URG:** Acknowledging the special role that women play in society, and in the shaping of the social mores and educational values of the next generation, as well as the extra underrepresentation that they face even within URG, all policy initiatives for the upliftment of underrepresented socio-economic and socio-cultural groups will be especially targeted towards the girls and women in these groups.

6.3. Education of children belonging to Scheduled Caste Communities and Other Backward Classes

Due to various historical and linguistic factors, SC and OBC communities face severe disadvantages at multiple levels. Bridging the social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes in school education will continue to be one of the major goals of all education sector development programmes. While several programmatic interventions to reduce social category gaps in education that are currently in place will continue to be pursued, along with all other key policy laid out in [Section 6.1](#), additional key specific interventions for reducing the social category gaps in school education will include:

- P6.3.1. Recruitment of teachers from SC and OBC communities:** Affirmative action in higher education space has allowed for a significant number from marginalised communities acquire teaching degrees. However, due to the various disadvantages they carry forward, many find it difficult to obtain a job. Special initiatives should be taken up by the concerned ministries and departments to up-skill them and prepare them to be recruited as teachers in schools, especially in their home regions where they can become excellent role models.

In addition, in geographies where SC and OBC teachers are underrepresented, scholarships will be offered to the best students and IAs from SC and OBC communities to enter outstanding teacher education programmes and become teachers; efforts will be made to employ them in these areas after they complete their education.

- P6.3.2. Translated learning material:** Many students from SC and OBC communities have home languages that are different from the State/official language. This puts them at a disadvantage up front as they have to learn a new language unlike other peers whose home language and medium of instruction may not differ. Easy-read material translated into local spoken languages will be used

in the early grades to initiate children into learning; such learning materials will be prepared locally under the supervision of BITE/DIET faculty or other academic coordinators. A concerted effort will be made to hire teachers who speak various local home languages so that they may use these languages as a medium of transaction with students, as needed, in order to improve learning outcomes.

6.4. Education of children from tribal communities

Tribal communities and children from Scheduled Tribes also face severe disadvantages at multiple levels due to various historical and geographical factors. Children from tribal communities often report finding their school education irrelevant and foreign to their lives, both culturally and academically. While several programmatic interventions to uplift children from tribal communities are currently in place, and will continue to be pursued, sometimes children do not receive the benefits of these interventions due to geographical barriers and a lack of proper oversight, management, and community knowledge of these benefits. All the Policy actions of [Section 6.1](#) will again be very important also for tribal communities.

Contextualising curriculum and incorporating tribal knowledge traditions will be an immediate action, while encouraging students from the community to gain qualifications as teachers will be a longer-term one.

P6.4.1. Relevant education: Curriculum and pedagogy will be contextualised to make education a relevant experience for students from tribal communities. Unfortunately, one of the foremost issues children face today is the lack of relevance of the education that takes place in their schools; this comes from a curriculum design and pedagogy that often excludes them, and from teachers who do not understand or relate to their culture or language.

All these aspects have to be addressed systematically to make education relevant. Contextualising curriculum and incorporating tribal knowledge

traditions will be an immediate and necessary action, while encouraging students from the community to gain qualifications as teachers will be a longer-term one. To the latter end, scholarships will be offered to the best students and IAs in tribal areas to enter outstanding teacher education programmes and become teachers, and efforts will be made to employ them in these areas after they complete their education.

Concerted efforts will be made to provide learning materials in local tribal languages, and also teach in these languages (as a medium of communication, transaction, or instruction), especially in children's early years, whenever possible. Bilingual textbooks will be prepared and bilingual education will be pursued to facilitate smooth transition from the home language of children to the language which is used as the medium of instruction in schools.

P6.4.2. Community coordinators: Coordinators at the State level and tribal-dominated districts will be deployed by choosing members from the specific tribal communities. These coordinators will monitor education programmes and support the activities of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and education departments and ministries in order to ensure that children of these communities receive the benefits earmarked for them.

6.5. Education of children from educationally underrepresented groups within minority communities

The Policy acknowledges the importance of interventions to promote education of children belonging to all minority or religious communities, and particularly those communities that are educationally underrepresented.

The greatest educational underrepresentation among religious communities in the school and higher education system has occurred in the Muslim community. Even though there have been significant improvements in the enrolment and retention of Muslim children in school education, the gap between Muslims and other population groups continues to remain high. Muslim students have primary enrolment rates that are lower than the national average, and this gap only increases at the middle, secondary and higher education levels. All the Policy actions of [Section 6.1](#) thus must apply, in particular, also to children from Muslim communities - in particular special actions must be taken to attain higher participation levels and learning outcomes of Muslims in newly dedicated Special Education Zones having high populations from Muslim communities as per [P6.1.2](#). Analogous Special Education Zones must also be dedicated in areas where there is underrepresentation in higher education among other minority or religious groups.

Some of the other initiatives to enhance participation of children belonging to Muslim and other underrepresented minority communities in school education will include the following:

P6.5.1. Supply-side interventions to incentivise Muslims and other educationally underrepresented minorities to complete school education: Excellent schools will be established in areas with high Muslim populations, with efforts to bridge language barriers when they exist by hiring teachers who speak and write Urdu or other home languages.

Strong efforts will be made to impart foundational literacy and numeracy, in accordance with the three language formula, along with strong science, mathematics, and art backgrounds, to prepare an increasing number of students from Muslim communities and other educationally underrepresented minorities for higher education. Steps will be taken for all linguistic and minority groups that exist in high concentrations in certain areas and that are educationally-underrepresented. In particular, scholarships for excellent students from Muslim communities and other underrepresented minority communities to enter higher education - identified on the basis of National Testing Service scores - will be established.

P6.5.2. Strengthening madrasas, maktabas, and other traditional or religious schools, and modernising their curriculum: Existing traditional or religious schools, such as madrasas, maktabas, gurukuls, pathshalas, and religious schools from the Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist and other traditions may be encouraged to preserve their traditions and pedagogical styles, but at the same time must be supported to also integrate the subject and learning areas prescribed by the National Curricular Framework into their curricula in order to reduce and eventually eliminate the underrepresentation of children from these schools in higher education. The programmes being implemented to encourage traditional or religious institutions to modernise their curriculum will be expanded and strengthened:

- a. Financial assistance will be provided to introduce science, mathematics, social studies, Hindi, English, or other relevant languages in their curriculum in order to enable children studying in traditional cultural or religious schools to attain the learning outcomes defined for Grades 1-12.
- b. Students in madrasas, maktabas, and other traditional or religious institutions such as schools in Buddhist monasteries, etc. will be allowed and indeed encouraged to appear for State Board Examinations and assessments by the National Testing Agency in order to enrol in higher education institutions.
- c. Capacities of teachers in teaching of science, mathematics, language, social studies will be developed, including orientation to new pedagogical practices.
- d. Libraries and laboratories will be strengthened and adequate teaching-learning materials made available.

6.6. Education of children from urban poor families

There are nearly 1 crore children from urban poor families, and this number seems to continue to increase (though it is hoped that measures may be taken soon to reverse this trajectory). About half of all urban poor children are severely malnourished, while nearly three-quarters are illiterate. The parents of these children have often left their hometowns in other States to make a new living in an urban area in a new State, often rendering their children unacquainted with both their home State's culture as well as life in the city. As a result, the generational divide between parents and children is often particularly stark among the urban poor. This, coupled with the lack of literacy and proper schooling and playing opportunities, often leads children and adolescents into unfortunate and harmful activities, including petty crime and drugs; an estimated one third of street children are dealing with substance abuse.

Providing children from urban poor families with quality education is the only way to rescue so many of these children and enable them to become happy and productive members of society. The Policy points in [Chapters 1-3](#) (and many in [Section 6.1](#)) are particularly relevant for children from urban poor families and must be implemented urgently for these children.

Additional specific Policy points for urban poor children include:

- P6.6.1. Focused efforts on educational access:** Greater attention will be paid to enhance access to school education by children from urban poor families. Partnerships with urban local bodies will be strengthened to establish new schools in unserved and underserved areas, to enhance the enrollment capacity of existing schools, and to ensure that safe routes exist for children to access these schools from urban poor areas.
- P6.6.2. Role of social workers and counsellors:** Research studies show that visits from and associations with social workers form the most effective intervention in encouraging children from urban poor families to go to school. The new and existing schools that will enhance access for children in urban poor areas, as per [P6.6.1](#), will also invest in hiring excellent social workers and counsellors. The social workers will: work to find children and parents in urban poor areas; explain to them the value of school; connect parents and children with schools, teachers, remedial instructors, and tutors; plan with them methods (such as walking groups) and routes for children to reach school safely; inform parents of children's learning outcomes and help them to be involved in their children's learning (including arranging parent-teacher conferences as necessary); help children maintain connections with their parents' languages and culture; help keep children away from harmful activities; and, along with counsellors, generally be a source of support and advice to children and their families throughout the learning process as needed.

P6.6.3. Curricula that take into account the needs of the urban poor: Some parts of the curriculum will be redesigned to help students from urban poor families navigate life in urban poor areas, and will include: matters of health and safety, clean drinking water, the harmful effects of substance abuse, ethics, nonviolence, matters of gender equality, respect for women, tolerance and empathy for people of all backgrounds, multilingualism, the harmful side of improper use of technology such as smartphones, beneficial uses of technology, financial literacy, aspirations for employment and higher education, and skills and vocational training. The curriculum will be designed to maximise health and safety, opportunities for learning, and the future security and productivity of children from urban poor families.

6.7. Education of transgender children

P6.7.1. Ensuring participation of transgender children in school education: The Policy recognises the urgent need to address matters related to the education of transgender children and initiating appropriate measures to remove the stigma and discrimination they face in their life, including with respect to education. As a part of the initiative to promote education of transgender children, a reliable national database on transgender children will be created. The creation of safe and supportive school environments which do not violate their Constitutional rights will be accorded priority. Schools, school complexes, and social workers will be encouraged to develop a plan in consultation with transgender students and their parents regarding the use of their names and access to rest rooms and other spaces corresponding to their gender identity. The curriculum and textbooks will be reoriented to address issues related to transgender children, their concerns, and approaches that would help meet their learning needs. Teachers will be sensitised about the issues related to transgender children and their concerns and learning needs.

P6.7.2. Involvement of civil society groups: Civil society groups that have gained substantial knowledge of and experience in working with transgender children will be involved in the planning and implementation of education programmes for these children. Active involvement of civil society groups in conjunction with social workers will be sought to facilitate and ensure participation of transgender children in all levels of school education. More active engagement of the Directorate of Education in the States as well as NCPCR/SCPCR will be sought to ensure that all transgender children of school age are enabled to receive quality school education.

6.8. Education of children with special needs

The Policy recognises the importance of providing CWSN the same opportunities of obtaining quality education as any other child. The RTE Act Amendment Act, which came into force with effect from the 1st of August, 2012, provides for the inclusion of CWSN as contained in the Persons with Disabilities Act 2005 and the National Trust Act, under the purview of the RTE Act, thereby providing CWSN free and compulsory education; in fact, the RTE Act ensures CWSN free and compulsory education either until the completion of the elementary stage of school education or till the age of 18 years. Further, the RTE Act also provides to parents of children with severe and profound disabilities the right to opt for home-based education. The Policy points indicated in Section 6.1 are all important in the context of CWSN as well.

Specific additional policy initiatives to ensure that every CWSN is provided meaningful and quality education will include the following:

- P6.8.1. Inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools:** One of the priority areas of action in regard to education programmes for CWSN will continue to be mainstreaming them in neighborhood schools and supporting their participation in the schooling process from the Foundational stage through Grade 12.

Physical access to schools for children with special needs will be enabled through prioritising barrier-free structures, ramps, handrails, disabled-friendly toilets, and suitable transportation.

- P6.8.2. Financial support for initiatives for educating children with special needs:** Clear and efficient avenues for obtaining financial support will be provided to schools or school complexes for integration of CWSN, as well as for the establishment of resource centres at the village/block level where needed for learners with severe or multiple disabilities - such centres would assist parents/guardians in part-time or full time home-schooling and in skilling such learners (including in ISL or other local sign languages if they exist, and accessing provisions available through NIOS).

- P6.8.3. Physical access to schools for children with special needs** will be enabled through prioritising barrier-free structures, ramps, handrails, disabled-friendly toilets, and suitable transportation for CWSN to comfortably attend schools. While in the long-term, the goal will be for all schools to have such facilities, in the interim schools and school complexes will be able to apply for funding to arrange and build such facilities as needed.
- P6.8.4. Inclusion of children with special needs:** Assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools, as well as adequate and language-appropriate teaching-learning materials (e.g. textbooks in accessible formats such as large print and Braille) will be made available to help CWSN integrate more easily into classrooms and engage with teachers and their peers. To this end, research efforts to develop and test solutions that are effective in local contexts will be supported. The other components of interventions will include functional and formal assessment, appropriate educational placement, and preparation of Individualised Educational Plans (IEP).
- P6.8.5. Provisions for home-based education:** Home-based education will be provided for children with severe and profound disabilities who are unable to go to schools, with the objective of enabling them to complete school education, including through NIOS. Orientation of parents/caregivers along with wide-scale dissemination of learning materials to enable parents/caregivers to actively support their children's learning needs will be accorded priority.
- The programmes for inclusive education of CWSN will be implemented in collaboration with resource centres for CWSN as well as NGOs and volunteer organisations who may wish to participate. Local resource centres and NGOs would be involved in the planning of inclusive education, awareness generation, community mobilisation, early detection, identification and assessment of CWSN.
- P6.8.6. Availability of open schooling for hearing-impaired students:** NIOS will develop high quality modules to teach ISL, and to teach other basic subjects using ISL.
- P6.8.7. Special educators and therapists with cross-disability training:** To assist teachers in catering to the needs of all learners more fully, each school complex will appoint an adequate number of special educators with cross-disability training to work with all schools within that complex. Resource centres at the block level in conjunction with special educators at the school complex level will support the rehabilitation and educational needs of learners with severe or multiple disabilities, and will assist parents/guardians in achieving high quality home-schooling and skilling for such students.

P6.8.8. Scholarships for differently-abled students: As a part of the efforts to enhance participation of differently-abled children in school education, scholarships for talented and meritorious students will be offered on a more liberal scale, especially at the secondary stage of education, to facilitate their entry into higher education.