

World Development Report - Education

What is the issue?

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- The World Bank has recently released its World Development Report, 2018.
- The report, titled “Learning to Realize Education’s Promise”, focusses on education.
- Among many of its findings, the report draws attention to the impact of malnutrition on children's education.

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What are the highlights?

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- The report has warned of a **learning crisis in global education** particularly in low and middle-income countries like India.
- It seemed to have made a **rights based approach** to education as evident in sub-sections titled Education as freedom, Education improves individual freedoms, Education benefits all of society.
- It has stressed that **schooling without learning** was a wasted development opportunity and a great injustice to children worldwide.
- India ranks second after Malawi in a list of 12 countries wherein a grade two student could not read a single word of a short text.
- India also tops the list of seven countries in which a grade two student could not perform two-digit subtraction.
- In rural India in 2016, only half of grade 5 students could fluently read text at the level of the grade 2 curriculum.

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How is nutrition influencing education?

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- **Stunting** - Stunting is essentially one of the manifestations of poor nutrition.
- The report points out the high under-five child stunting rates among the poor sections in low-income countries .
- Strikingly, it highlights through MRI images, the difference in brain development between a stunted and a normal child.
- This is reflected in the physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development of the child in early years.
- This under-development ultimately prevents the child from learning well in later years.
- Resultantly, despite the quality of education in schools, deprived children show relatively poor performance.
- This translates into decreased opportunities and lower wages later in life.
- **Deprivation** - The report brings out how intense deprivation can hinder the physical and mental development of children.
- Deprivations could take the form of chronic malnutrition, unhealthy environments, or lack of nurture by caregivers.
- This in effect undermines a child's learning capabilities as it impairs the infants' brain development.

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What should be done?

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- This learning crisis is supposedly widening the social gaps instead of narrowing them.
- Early **childhood development programmes** are aiming at compensating

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for poor children's disadvantages.

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- However, it must be ensured that the programmes are resourced for **nutritional inputs**.

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- Importantly this should go along with a focus on antenatal and postnatal care, **sanitation, and counselling** of parents.

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- Reduction of child stunting should be one of the major moral imperatives of nations today as this ensures a **quality human resource**.

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Source: The Hindu

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