



WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN INDIA-AN ANALYSIS

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Women education in India has additionally been a prime fear of both the authorities and civil society as educated women can play a totally crucial position within the improvement of the Country. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their conventional position and change their existence. In spite of the reality that Indian government has expressed a robust dedication closer to education for all, however still India has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. In India that is yet to fulfill the necessities notwithstanding reforms. This paper analyses the status of Women education, literacy rate and gender disparities in literacy charges in rural and concrete areas in India.

INTRODUCTION

Women consists almost half of the population in the world. As per as their social status is concerned, they are not treated as equal to men in all the places, though in the western countries women are treated on par with men in the most of the fields, their counterpart in the east suffers from many disabilities. The hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The rise of feminist ideas has, however, led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world in recent times. Women education in India has also been a major worry of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. We can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women's empowerment in India. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large number of women of our country is illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Girls who have been educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families. Educated women can recognize the importance of health care and know how to seek it for themselves and their children. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them. However women's literacy rates are significantly lower than men's in most developing countries.

No doubt a large number of Indian women are slowly emerging out of a system that had oppressed and exploited them for centuries. In spite of the fact that Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all, but still India has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. In India this is yet to meet the requirements despite reforms. No doubt, the progress in female literacy has taken place with time passes, but this increase is very slow. Though India could well become one of the largest economies in the world, it is being hindered due to lack of women's participation. In the present study an effort has been made to analyse the status of women's education, literacy rate and gender disparities in literacy rates in rural and urban areas in India. Secondary level data has been used for achieving the objectives of the study.

Beginning with the rig Vedic period, Indian women were denied political powers. Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. The denial of many basic rights continued to plunge downward during the later Vedic period, with further plummeting through forthcoming centuries. During the eighteenth century women suffered from several handicaps like female infanticide, sati, purdah, child marriage, illiteracy and subsequently forced child widowhood in the 19th century. Women were treated no better than domestic animals. However, in the British period there was revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar took various initiatives to make education available to the women of India. However women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the three decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate.

LITERACY RATE IN INDIA

Women's education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. In India the male and female literacy rates have shown increasing trend but male literacy rates were found to be consistently at the forefront of female literacy rate. The 2001 Census report indicates that literacy among women as only 54 percent it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women in India is even much lower to national average i.e. 65.38 percent. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. Moreover, education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 54 percent against 76 percent of men as per 2001 Census. Again Census 2011 proved the low literacy rate of females i.e. 65.46 percent against the 82.14 percent male's literacy rate.

LITERACY RATE IN INDIA

WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN INDIA - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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Table-1

Year	Total no. of Literate	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.9
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Registrar General and Census Commissioner India 2001, Census of India 2011

The male and female literacy rates have shown increasing trend but male literacy rates were found to be consistently at the forefront of female literacy rates. According to Table-1 during the pre-independence time literacy rate for women is very low as compared to their male counterparts. During the post-independence period literacy rates have shown a substantial increase in general. The literacy rate of male has almost tripled over the period e.g. 25 percent in 1951 and 76 percent in 2001 and further 82.14 percent in 2011. On the other side the female literacy rate has increased at a faster pace than the male literacy during the decade 1981-2001. The growth is almost 6 times e.g. 7.9 percent in 1951 and 54 percent in 2001. The figures show that since 1901, through the twentieth century, the female literacy was much below than their male counterparts. Even in 2011, the gap still exist between male and female literacy rate undoubtedly, the Indian government has initiated various programmes and policies to increase female literacy but these programmes and policies done little to attain the goal. The higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly the reason for women's dependence on men and to play a subordinate role. The lack of education is the main cause for women's exploitation, violence and negligence. Education can help women to understand the provisions that are made to strengthen them. Thus promoting education among women is of great importance in empowering them to accomplish their goals in par with men in different spheres of life.

There are several reason for the low levels of literacy in India. If a family has to choose between educating a son or a daughter because of financial restrictions, typically the son will be chosen. Negative parental attitudes toward educating daughters can also be a barrier to a girl's education. Many parents view educating sons as an investment because the sons will be responsible for caring for ageing parents and on the other hand, they may see the education of daughters a waste of money. Rural women are lagging behind in terms of education as compared to urban counterparts. The situation has led to a great divide between the rural and urban people and the urban people are at advantage, whereas the rural are deprived of the same. There are several valid reasons justify these differences. The most important reason is the poor socio-economic status of the neglected poor rural people. A boy's education is generally perceived as most significant as it increased the benefits of employment to the parents. In rural areas, the prevailing trend of early marriages become the block in their education. Girl's education is viewed as liability in the villages because it is difficult to find match for an educated girl in the rural areas. Since very beginning the role of female is confined to domestic work and looking after children.

Provisions for Women's Education in India

Educational Provisions in the Indian Constitution

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment.

Article 21A. The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine. (EIGHTY-SIXTH AMENDMENT ACT, 2002)

Article 41. Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases.

The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

Article 45. Provision for free and compulsory education for children.

(1) The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

(2) The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years. (EIGHTY-SIXTH AMENDMENT ACT, 2002) Article 46. Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections.

The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 51A (k). who is a parent or guardian to provide

opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years. (EIGHTY-SIXTH AMENDMENT ACT, 2002)

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, commonly known as the Right To Education (RTE) Act, is being seen with much hope to bring about the long awaited changes in education of children aged 6-14 years, addressing disparities of access and quality. The Act was notified on 27.8.2010 and is in force from 1.4.2010. While stating the duties of appropriate Government authorities at various levels, the Act has also included duties of parents and guardians to get their children /wards admitted for elementary education in neighborhood schools. The biased parental attitude towards girl child in general and to education of girl's child in particular will hopefully register a change by enforcement of the Act.

Minorities

Article 29. Protection of interests of minorities.

(1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.

(2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30. Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

(1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

(1A) In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause.

(2) The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

Article 350A. Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage.

It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

Article 15(5) Nothing in this article or in sub-clause (g) of clause (1) of article 19 shall prevent the State from making any special provision, by law, for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in so far as such special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions referred to in clause (1) of article 30. (NINETY-THIRD AMENDMENT ACT, 2005)

Equality

Article 14. Equality before law.

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15. Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to—

(a) Access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or

(b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.

(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

(4) Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 17. Abolition of Untouchability.

"Untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "Untouchability" shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 24. Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.

No child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment

Gender and Vulnerable Groups

Article 39. Certain principles of policy to be followed by the State. The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing

(a) That the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

(e) That the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;

(f) That children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Religion

Article 25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.

(1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.

(2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law

(a) Regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;

(b) Providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Explanation I.—the wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Explanation II.—In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

Article 26. Freedom to manage religious affairs.

Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right

(a) To establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;

(b) To manage its own affairs in matters of religion;

Article 28. Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.

(1) No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.

(2) Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution.

(3) No person attending any educational institution recognised by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto.

Educational Provisions in Centrally Sponsored Schemes in School Education (CSS) Major Schemes for Elementary Education

1. Operation Black Board
2. Teacher Education
3. Education Guarantee Scheme & Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE)
4. Mid-day Meal Scheme
5. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
6. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
7. Shiksha Karmi
8. Mahila Samakhya
9. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)
10. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
11. Lok Jumbish
12. Janshala Programme
13. Padhe Bitiya Badhe Bitiya
14. Ladali Scheme

Major Schemes for Secondary Education

1. Access and Equity
2. Quality Improvement in Schools (QIS)

3. ICT in Schools

4. Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)

5. Vocationalisation of Education

Barriers and Problems against Women Education

In spite of certain outstanding examples of individual achievements, and a definite improvement in their general condition over the years, it remains true that Indian women still constitute a large body of under - privileged citizens. Women of course do not form a homogenous group in class or caste terms. Nevertheless, they face distinctive problems that call for special attention. The Backward Classes Commission set up by the Government of India in 1953 classified women of India as a backward group requiring special attention. The Ministry of Education clubs girls with Scheduled Castes and Tribes as the three most backward groups in education. The educational, economic, political and social backwardness of women makes them the largest group hindering the process of social change. It is inevitable that when this 'backward' group has the major responsibility of bringing up future generations the advancement of society cannot be rapid or take any significant form of development. In the report of the committee appointed by the National Council for Women's Education it was emphatically stated that what was needed to convert the equality of women from de jure to de facto status was widespread education for girls and women and a re-education of men and women to accept new and scientific attitudes towards each other and to themselves.

A changing society and a developing economy cannot make any headway if education, which is one of the important agents affecting the norms of morality and culture, remains in the hands of traditionalists who subscribe to a fragmented view of the country's and the world's heritage. The differences between the positions of men and women in the society will not lessen; leave alone disappear, as long as there are differences between the education levels of men and women. Inadequate education or no education is the most important factor contributing to the backwardness of our masses, especially women. The low literacy among women brings down the national literacy. This gap which exists between the literacy rates of the two sexes also exists between the enrolment of girls and boys at all levels of education. Right from the primary school to the university, we find that the number of girl students is considerably lower than boys.

According to Article 45 of the Constitution, universal compulsory and free education until the age of 14 was to be achieved by the year 1960. Looking at the present condition of primary education in villages, it is doubtful whether we can achieve 100% enrolment of girls. It is unfortunately true of our society that children are sent to school not according to their intelligence or aptitude but according to their sex. The reasons for not sending girls to school are both economic and social. In rural areas, girls are required to help in household work. The resources of the rural poor are so limited that they do not have anything to spare for children's education. If resources are available, it is the boy who is sent to school first. Parents also do not see the value of educating especially a daughter who would get married and remain a housewife. Since they cannot see any direct relationship between education and economic betterment, they have very little motivation to send their children to school. It is still not being realized that there is definite connection between education, good motherhood and efficient house management. The management of millions of households and the upbringing of millions of children is thus in the hands of illiterate women. It is here that a change is required if our democratic and socialistic intensions are not to remain a mere pretence. People can be motivated to have their

children educated only if educational system is directly linked with economic and social development.

The plight of women, in terms of education is further compounded by the negative attitude of parents toward female education. Some parents are usually reluctant to send their girl child for formal education especially to higher levels like their male counterpart. Another problem closely related to this is the reluctance to acquire western education and misunderstanding on the part of the girls themselves about the values of the acquisition of formal education. In education, equity means equal access to good education.

Restricted access to education by women in this country is profoundly rooted in history, religion, culture, the psychology of self, law, political institution and social attitudes which interact in several ways to limit women's access to formal education when compared with their male counterparts. It has been observed that Indian women are lagging behind their counterparts in developed and some developing nations due to the late start in educating them. This is caused by our traditions and culture which are hostile to women. This tradition reduces them to kitchen manageresses and producers of babies. Thus, their education ideally, is expected to end in kitchen a condition which ironically is detested by many parents thereby discouraging their investment in girl-child education.

Other problems against women education include the familiar problems like lack of funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate manpower, sexual harassment, conflicting societal role expectations, government policies and lack of political will power to implement the entire educational programme.

The inferiority complex observable in Indian women can be attributed to the influence of environmental manipulation. Through the traditional socialization process of the typical society, women are made to accept negative self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotyping and stigmatization that they are members of a weaker sex. At present, the forces which combine to hamper women education and development in India could be viewed broadly to include denial of access to education, early marriage, confinement to solitary living, subjugation by culture to accept choices forced on them, discrimination and harassment at work, political disenfranchisement from elective and political appointment and exposure to cruel mourning rites upon the death of their husband.

Nearby pose of Women Education in India

In spite of the forceful intervention by a bastion of female privilege, feminist critics, constitutional guarantees, protecting laws and sincere efforts by the state governments and central government through various schemes and programmes over the last 62 years and above all, the United Nation's enormous pressure with regard to the uplift of the plight of women in terms education is still in the state of an enigma in India for several reasons. The 2011 Census report indicates that literacy among women as only 65.46 percent it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women India is even much lower to national average i.e. 74.04. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 65.46% against 82.14% of men as per 2011 Census.

Table I Literacy Rate in India

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India (2011)

According to the Table I the pre-Independence time literacy rate for women had a very poor spurt in comparison to literacy rate of men. This is witnessed from the fact that literacy rate of women has risen from 0.7 % to 7.3 % where as the literacy rate of men has risen from 9.8 % to 24.9 % during these four decades. During the post- independence period literacy rates have shown a substantial increase in general. However the literacy rate of male has almost tripled over the period e.g. 25% in 1951 and 76 % in 2001. Surprisingly the female literacy rate has increased at a faster pace than the male literacy during the decade 1981 - 2001. The growth is almost 6 times e.g. 7.9 % in 1951 and 54 % in 2001.

From this analysis one can infer that still the female literacy rate (only half of the female population are literates) is wadding behind male literacy rate (three fourth of the male population are literates). The rate of school drop outs is also found to be comparatively higher in case of women. This higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly attributing for women dependence on men and to play a subordinate role. The lack of education is the root cause for women's exploitation and negligence. Only literacy can help women to understand the Indian's constitutional and legislative provisions that are made to strengthen them. Thus promoting education among women is of great important in empowering them to accomplish their goals in par with men in different spheres of life.

Educational Equality

Another area in which women's equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs is the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non-literate householders.

**Table II
State-Wise Percentage of Female Literacy in the Country As Per 2011 Census**

S. No.	Name of the State	Female Literacy
1.	Andhra Pradesh	59.7%
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	59.6%
3.	Assam	67.3%
4.	Bihar	53.3%
5.	Chattisgarh	60.6%
6.	Delhi	80.9%
7.	Goa	81.8%

8.	Gujarat	70.7%
9.	Haryana	66.8%
10.	Himachal Pradesh	76.6%
11.	Jammu and Kashmir	58.0%
12.	Jharkhand	56.2%
13.	Karnataka	68.1%
14.	Kerala	92.0%
15.	Madhya Pradesh	60.0%
16.	Maharashtra	75.5%
17.	Manipur	73.2%
18.	Meghalaya	73.8%
19.	Mizoram	89.4%
20.	Nagaland	76.7%
21.	Orissa	64.4%
22.	Punjab	71.3%
23.	Rajasthan	52.7%
24.	Sikkim	76.4%
25.	Tamil Nadu	73.9%
26.	Tripura	83.1%
27.	Uttar Pradesh	59.3%
28.	Uttarakhand	70.7%
29.	West Bengal	71.2%

Union Territories

1.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	81.8%
2.	Chandigarh	81.4%
3.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65.9%
4.	Daman & Diu	79.6%
5.	Lakshadweep	88.2%
6.	Pondicherry	81.2%
	All India	65.46%

Source: Census of India - 2011

According to the Table II the state wise female literacy rate had an average of 65.46% in all India basis in 2011 census the high literacy rate is 92.0% in Kerala and least literacy rate is 52.7% in Rajasthan in 2011 census while comparing literacy rate of female 11% increased in 2011 census is increased from 54.16% to 65.46%. Women's are growing well in the last 10 years. Government of India has been taken various steps and plans especially for women in every movement.

CONCLUSION

In gist it can be said that history is the evidence that women has been discriminated till independence with the exception of the Vedic period. There is quite a bit of evidence to observe that one of the factors responsible to decrease in gender inequalities is to increase the women participation into work force, which further is effected by the enhancement of their educational level. Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. The greatest single factor which can incredibly improve the status of women in any society is education. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving self esteem, self confidence, necessary courage and their status within the family. Education especially of women has a major impact on health and nutrition as an instrument of developing a sustainable strategy for population control. Moreover educated women can play an equally important role as men in nation building process. Special measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as

development of occupation/technical skills by women. Gender sensitive curricula should be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination. Sectoral time targets in existing policies should be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to the rural areas.

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