

## **Number of out-of-school children slightly improves**

Islamabad: The UNESCO on Wednesday launched the Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 showing a slight yet steady reduction in the number of Pakistani out-of-school children during the last two years.

According to the report launched during a special ceremony here, 24 million Pakistani children are currently out of schools though the number was 25 million in 2015 and 26 million in 2014. Also, the number of schools with missing facilities like toilets has come down to 28 percent from 33 percent last year.



Featuring leading voices and distinguished experts from government, international organizations, civil society and academia, the report, previously known as the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, is an editorially independent, authoritative, and evidence-based annual report by the UNESCO.

With the core mandate of monitoring progress towards educational targets in the new Sustainable Development Goals framework, it receives immense attention and support from policy makers, media and general public nationally and internationally.

Minister of state for federal education and professional training Muhammad Balighur Rehman, who was the chief guest during the ceremony, said he was happy to see improvement in numbers on school enrollments and facilities.

“This Global Education Monitoring Report has got a new directive to review the progress of education under the 2030 Agenda. It not only looks into the education sector but also focuses on the relationship of education and other sustainable developments goals. And for that, our government has already adopted SDG4 and has converted it into our national development goals, education has always been our first priority and we are fully committed to it,” he said.

The minister appreciated the thematic part of the report which highlights 6Ps (Planet, prosperity, people, peace, place and partnership) and it also indicates towards the 7th P which is Pakistan.

He added that poverty reduction, hunger eradication, improved health, gender equality and empowerment, sustainable agriculture, and just societies etc, could be achieved through quality education.

“Your thinking defines the course you take so keep up your faith and don’t lose your heart in the way. We must point out and try to rectify whatever we feel is going wrong in our society but that does not mean that we should overlook whatever good is happening in Pakistan,” he said.

According to him, in order to find a solution to a problem, we must identify it first, this report has identified many problems in education sector which is the first step toward finding the solutions to all the issues mentioned in it, stated the minister.

“If we look at the brighter side, we can safely say that we are on the right path. Our government came with a clear vision and we adopted 4Es strategy (Extremism, Energy, Economy, and Education) and we have been able to improve each and every sector of society, be it education or energy issue,” he said. The minister said the government had adopted Vision 2025 in which the SDGs were fully imbedded.

“All the provincial governments are on board in this regard, while the NCHD has been mandated to achieve literacy rate of 90 per cent by 2019. We have established National Curriculum Council in which we have emphasised upon the character building, civic sense and care for the environment the most,” he said.

The minister said the ministry had decided to revise the examination system of boards in the country, while major focus was also on national assessment system. He congratulated the team of UNESCO and their partners for launching the report and said he hoped that the report would be beneficial for both policymakers and educationists. The ceremony was also attended by Senator Razina Alam Khan, UNESCO Director Vibeke Jensen, UNICEF’s Angela Kearney and UNHCR’s Indrika Ratwatte

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