

Literacy rate projected to reach 60pc by 2015

Unesco edu specialist says Pakistan spending 9.9pc of budget on education

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is spending just 2.3 per cent of GNP and 9.9 per cent of overall government budget on education, India 4.5 per cent of GNP and 12.7 per cent of government budget while Bangladesh is spending 2.1 per cent of GNP and 14.1 per cent of total government budget on education.

Arshad Saeed Khan, National Education Specialist, UNESCO, informed this at an event. He said the literacy rate of Pakistan is projected to reach 60 per cent, India's 71 per cent while Bangladesh is estimated to have 61 per cent of literacy rate till the year 2015.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) in collaboration with United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other UN agencies including Unido organised a special event Tuesday to highlight "Girls' Right to Education".

The event was planned in lieu of UNESCO's Director General,

Irina Bokova's attribution to Malala Yousufzai during the international launch of Global Monitoring Report 2012 in Paris on October 16, calling for global attention to the right of girls and women to education.

Timo Pakkala, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, also attended the event. He emphasised that girls' education is a must, in order to meet development targets in Pakistan. Pakistan is lagging behind the achievement of MDGs while a lot of work is to be done in education sector in order to achieve the MDGs especially in the remote areas and FATA where the female literacy rate is just 3 per cent.

Dr Kozue Kay Nagata, Director UNESCO Pakistan, in her opening remarks quoted from the global speech of the Director General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova said, "I would like to dedicate this ceremony to Malala Yousufzai, a young brave activist for the right of girls' education in Pakistan, assaulted last week, because she wanted

to go school". Also, Dr. Nagata added, "Gender equality in education constitutes a basic human right as well as an important means of improving economic outcomes".

The event was timely as it encompassed findings of UNESCO's flagship document, "Education For All, Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012", which was officially launched in Islamabad, Pakistan on 18th October.

According to afore mentioned report, youth (between age 15-24) female literacy rate in Pakistan is 61 per cent against 79 per cent for males. However, youth female literacy rate is projected to be 72 per cent (against 82 per cent for males) by year 2015, whereas adult female literacy rate of older age group (15+) is projected to be 47 per cent. This indicates that young Pakistani females are more educated than their mothers.

The gender-based ratio (female - male) of illiterate youth between ages 15 - 24 is, 64 per cent - 36 per cent. This shows that gender gap still exists. Near-

ly two thirds (63 per cent) of the 5.1 million out-of-schools children of primary school age group are girls. There are more female adolescents (3.9 million) than male adolescence (3.3 million) who are out-of-school, as stated in the Global Monitoring Report.

The Director UNESCO in her speech said, "Although gender gap in Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) in primary and secondary schools is getting reduced in major urban centers such as Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi, the gender gap is still high in Balochistan, Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, interior Sindh, and other conservative communities".

The other participants emphasized that economic progress is not possible when 50 per cent human resources are uneducated.

Armed conflicts in society and among groups can be avoided when women have equal access to education and participate in decision-making.