

3 million girls out of primary schools in Pakistan

Minister for Education and Professional Training Baligh-ur-Rehman attended the launching ceremony of 'Girls' Right to Education Programme' as the chief guest here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister stated that the 'Girls' Right to Education Programme,' a joint initiative of the Government of Pakistan and UNESCO is intended to promote girls' access and retention to education. He said "Despite many challenges, we are committed to improve the standards of education, including the girls' primary education."

The programme is worth \$7 million. The UNESCO will be working with the government over next three years to improve access to quality learning opportunities for primary girls in the hardest-to-reach areas of the country. It will be implemented in nine districts representing all provinces and areas of Pakistan. The aim is to get 50,000 more girls enrolled in primary schools, increase their retention and improve learning outcomes. It is funded under the Malala Funds-in-Trust agreement, signed in 2014 by Ms. Irina Bokova, director general of Unesco, and Baligh-ur-Rehman, minister of state for federal education and professional training.

The minister said that there is a 10% gender gap of net enrolment rate between girls and boys in our country and we have vowed to eliminate this gap while targeting 100% net enrolment rate in coming years.

"We envision standardising the education system in Pakistan in terms of curriculum, teaching, classroom environment and school facilities. Realising the growing need and demands of modern education system, the government has aimed at introducing ICT in all schools of the country", Baligh-ur-Rehman said.

The programme implementation involves community mobilisation and advocacy; improvement in school physical and learning environment with focus areas of renovating WASH and boundary walls; mobilising and energising school management committees; supporting teachers to be more effective in multi-grade teaching and improving girls' learning through activity-based learning and strengthening the capacities of provincial/area and district education officials to plan and implement programmes aimed at narrowing the gender gap.

In her video statement, the UNESCO director general highlighted that despite tremendous progress in access to education worldwide since 2000, there is still a long way to go. She said that approximately 31 million (55%) girls are out of primary schools worldwide, including 3 million girls in Pakistan. She said the new sustainable development goals that were recently

agreed fully recognise access to education as a basic human right which is essential for sustainable development.

UNESCO Representative in Pakistan Ms. Vibeke Jensen, in her welcome remarks, expressed sincere thanks to the Government of Pakistan and the education minister on this occasion.

Source: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-344488-3-million-girls-out-of-primary-schools-in-Pakistan>