



STATEMENT BY MRS. REVA NAYYAR, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT, MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, ON AGENDA ITEM 11 : UNICEF EDUCATION STRATEGY: ORAL REPORT AT THE FIRST REGULAR SESSION 2006 OF THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD 16-20 & 23 JANUARY 2006 ON JANUARY 17, 2006

Mr. President,

We welcome the ideas outlined in the oral report just presented, which set the stage for UNICEF to formulate a new education strategy. We support the focus on improved educational quality as well as targeted efforts to reduce gender and social disparities in relation to increased access, participation, and completion in quality basic education, and the emphasis on progress towards internationally agreed goals on education and gender equality as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. India also acknowledges and supports the critical role education can play as part of humanitarian response in emergency situations, as outlined in the oral report.

India's progress in this area as evidenced by the increasing literacy rates, including female literacy rate, and growing school enrolment demonstrate that a committed government and a supportive international development environment can make a difference. The Government of India has effectively backed its policy commitment to universal elementary education recently through articulation of a public commitment to spend 6% of the GDP on education and by increased allocation of resources. We remain mindful that the current pace of progress needs to be accelerated to achieve the education for all goals in the shortest period of time.

We agree on the need to focus on disadvantaged population groups, which is necessary if the benefits of education have to be spread across all strata of the society. It is known that the majority of out-of-school children are generally girls and children belonging to economically and socially disadvantaged communities. Special efforts, such as improved infrastructure, alternative educational opportunities, life-skills based quality education, and residential schools for older girls are being implemented in India across the country to universalize access and to strengthen additional education opportunities for adolescent girls. We encourage UNICEF to focus on specific project interventions to promote and facilitate education within the disadvantaged groups of the population.

Another challenge in India, as well as globally, is to ensure that all children enrolled in schools stay in school and learn. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) – the

National Plan for the Universalization of Elementary Education in India - is actively addressing the issue of "quality education" through strengthening of overall institutional structures and building capacity of key stakeholders to strengthen service delivery, improvements in school infrastructure and a focus on child-centered teaching and learning. UNICEF's education strategy would need to focus on this important issue as well.

Mr. President,

We remain committed to our partnership with UNICEF. We look forward to the formulation of the Education Strategy and to the opportunity to provide inputs and comment as the strategy is being developed.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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