

BEN-E Right to Education Index Country Brief

1. Introduction

BEN-Ethiopia

Basic Education Network Ethiopia (BEN-E) is a network (consortium) of 90 Ethiopian and International Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on education throughout the country. BEN-E was initiated in 1998 and established in 1999, legally registered as Basic Education Association in Ethiopia (BEA-E) by the Ministry of Justice (M.o.J) in April 2004.

As per the new Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Proclamation 1113/2019, BEN-E can now work on areas like Advocacy, Right issues (Gender, Persons with Disabilities, etc.), Good Governance, Conflict Resolution and Election without any restrictions.

Vision of the Network: To see a society in which all citizens have equal access to quality and inclusive education that enables them to develop their capacity and actively participate in national development.

RTEI

The Right to Education Index (RTEI) is a global accountability initiative that aims to ensure that all people, no matter where they live, enjoy their right to a quality education. RTEI is a global index built out of the international right to education framework to monitor national progress towards its fulfillment. It reveals key areas in need of improvement, offers country-to-country comparisons, and tracks progress over time. Ultimately, RTEI seeks to: Strengthen the expertise and capacity of civil society and education advocates; Increase public and political support for realizing the right to education; Hold governments and institutions accountable for their commitments to the right to education; and finally, uphold the right to education for every child and adult everywhere.

RTEI partners with civil society organizations, research institutions, and governments to collect data on a wide range of indicators explicitly derived from the international right to education framework. The data is used to form the Right to Education Index, which can be used by the general public, civil society, researchers, and governments to identify areas in need of improvement, explore issues more deeply, and place efforts where they are most needed.

2. Overview of RTEI results

The scores indicate that girls and Children with Disabilities are the most disadvantaged. Dropout rates for girls is higher than boys; completion rates are lower than boys; many schools are not girls friendly with no separate toilets, no water, and no sanitary materials which are major causes for girls dropout.

Even though national laws forbid discrimination in education based on gender, and there is targeted national education plan that aims to achieve free secondary, higher, and fundamental education, and though a significant achievement has been made, gender parity is not yet achieved.

On the other hand, when we observe the recent primary school completion rate, it was 49.4% for males and 62.9% for females which is encouraging.

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Special Needs/Inclusive Education Strategy of the MoE also clearly stipulate the rights of students with special needs to participate at all education levels, Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2019/20, P. 68.

However, access of quality education to Children with Disabilities (CWDs) is very low; only 10.1% of them have access to education; even for those enrolled, schools are not friendly. Majority of teachers are not trained to identify or to support Children with Disabilities. *There are almost none reasonable accommodation measures available for children with disabilities in schools as per the 2019/2020 data.*

Though education is considered as a right, it is not yet supported by a law, it is not yet compulsory. As a result, parents have no obligations to send their children to school, and the government to provide access to education for all school-aged children.

Pre-primary GER for Students with Disabilities, is only 1.0% for males and 0.7% for females, whereas the Enrolment rate of children with SNE, in Grades 1-8 is only 11.1%, Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2019/20, P. 69.

3. Impact of covid-19 on the right to education

COVID-19, like the rest of the world, has affected the education of children in Ethiopia. Schools were closed and education was disrupted for more than six months. There were efforts to continue education through distance modes such as radio and TV, but few households have electricity, radio and TV, thus it didn't reach all students. Some city schools also tried to give lecture notes and assignments through Telegram, but access to mobile networks was a challenge.

In response to the pandemic, the F.D.R.E. Ministry of Education had tried to use different technological approaches so as to maintain the education system. These include, but not limited to: Using printed materials distribution, Radio and Television Transmission, and Social media apps like Telegram. However, the approaches and efforts did not bring the required output (learning outcomes). Even though the pandemic is still a threat, the Government decided to safely reopen schools by making them follow COVID-19 guidelines and protocols. It has also used shift systems to decrease the number of students in a classroom to a maximum of 25 students per classroom. The Ministry also distributed face masks, sanitizer, disinfectant chemicals, IR thermometer, maintaining latrine and hand washing stations for more than 25,000 schools throughout the country, Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2019/20, P. 1.

When schools were opened, about 90% students came back to schools. The remaining were not able due to early marriages, family poverty and other causes. Thus, COVID-19 has affected a large portion of society and children.

4. Data availability

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education produces and publishes on its website annual statistical data, though it is about a year and a half delayed, which is much better than publications in the past. While the abstract is comprehensive *it requires data on key education indicators, such as budget by level of education and cost by student; salary of teachers by level and percentage of teachers' salary from total education budget; school sanitation and water availability. If such issues are addressed, the Abstract will avail better and detailed data.*

5. A prevailing Issue

One of the major issues that BEN-Ethiopia identified is gender equity in education. Girls are the most disadvantaged group of society in terms of accessing education. Dropout rates for girls is higher in grades 1

and 5 when compared to boys; completion rates of primary and secondary schooling are lower than boys; many schools are not girls friendly with less positive teacher attitude, no separate toilets, no water, and no sanitary materials which are major causes for girls dropout; and girls achievement is lower than boys especially in Junior and Secondary schools.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the education of girls has been highly affected because Schools were closed for more than six months. The distance education approach didn't help much girls especially in rural areas. Because of the lock down, many girls were sexually harassed, forced in to early marriage, and a large number of them didn't come back to school when opened again. Thus girl students were the most affected as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Analysis of Ethiopia RTEI Score:

Governance:

Ethiopia scored 56% which is lower than many countries.

Some of the encouraging observed survey results are plan of action (Annual and long-term education planning) which scored 100%; and Monitoring and Evaluation which also scored 100% and this is a result of the regular yearly assessments that are done with the involvement of government, education donors and Civil Society Organizations, which is encouraging. Though the scores given are average for National Law (63%), Financing (72%), and Data Availability (71%); it indicates that there is a need to make improvements in these areas.

Availability

Regarding classroom availability and presence of minimum standards the score is 80%; sanitation which include such as water and sanitary materials is 77%; teachers' availability and qualification by grade level is 86%; and learning materials such as textbooks is 64%. Though the scores given are average, there is a need for improvement and requires government intervention especially in budget allocation.

Accessibility:

Even though it is indicated in the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy that education is free for general education, in actual terms the RTEI assessment found that Free Education is accessible to 50%, and that Participation is only 55% which both require more intervention and budgeting by government.

Acceptability:

Regarding Aims of Education the RTEI score categorized it as at 87% and good rating since they are the basis for any education system, the Learning Environment is rated as 67%, and Learning Outcomes are rated at 81% that is encouraging because they tell the extent of student achievement.

Adaptability

The scores given to Children with Disabilities; Children of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples; girls; Child Labour; Migrants, Refugees, IDPS, and Children Deprived of Liberty; and Armed Conflict are very low, with the maximum 60% for Migrants, Refugees, IDPS, and Children Deprived of Liberty; and 0 for Children with Disabilities. Access of education to Children with Disabilities is very low in Ethiopia which is 10.1% and the most neglected target group.

By indicator type:

The major (broader) indicators that are selected by RTEI are Structural 63%, Process 66%, Outcome 57%. The scores given to all of the three indicators are not encouraging. Three indicators are interconnected because unless there is a well-established and organized put in place, there will not be an efficient process and both indicators determine the outcome. Thus, much attention is required by government, development partners, Civil Society Organizations and the public at large.