

ELECTIONS 2014

What Do the Manifestos of Political Parties promise Children?



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Children are important because they are *Citizens of Today* and *Voters of Tomorrow*. All elected representatives represent them too. All children need political social and economic commitment. As adults in the making, this is the time to determine their and the country's future.

The National Policy for Children 2013 emphasizes that *"rights of children are interrelated and interdependent and each one of them is equally important and fundamental to the well-being and dignity of the child"*. It is time to translate documents into action so that we can make a significant change in the lives of our children.

What children need are effective institutions, equitable services and adequate resources, combined with political will and accountable leadership. This is what political leaders can promise them.

But do the manifestos of our national parties reflect this?

A quick look at the manifestos of the five national political parties, Indian National Congress (INC), Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Aam Admi Party (AAP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM) and Samajwadi Party (SP) that most of them, barring the CPIM (Marxist) pay little attention to children.

CPI(M) is the only party which has talked about the critical issues like inclusion of children in the Food Security Act, better implementation of schemes for child trafficking, recognition and labour rights for Anganwadi workers and unlike other political parties, they have given a separate column for children in their manifesto. Samajwadi Party, on the other hand, has given a next to nil priority to children's issues in their manifesto.

Indian National Congress (INC)



Education

- We will transform "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" to "Shreshth Shiksha Abhiyan," provide state-of-the-art sporting facilities across India and establish a National Sports Education University.
- To improve quality of secondary education, we will focus on the implementation of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan.
- Will set up a National Commission for Students and a National Youth Commission.
- A National Sports Education University will be set up to educate students with exceptional talent.
- A team of sports experts would continuously scout for talent in the age-group of 8-15 years across India.
- Will strengthen facilities for children with special needs.
- Rajiv Gandhi Khel Abhiyan will be implemented to ensure high quality sporting facilities across India.
- An independent regulatory mechanism will oversee State and private institutions to ensure standardisation and quality of education.

Health

- Functional toilets will be ensured for every school.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Children: To launch a focused programme to improve the Child Sex Ratio as part of National Strategy for Care and Protection of the Girl Child.
- Adequate compensation will be provided to Anganwadi workers, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives and Accredited Social Health Activist.

Protection

- Strict implementation of the Child Labour and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act's.
- Earmark 30% of all funds coming to Panchayats and Nagarpalikas for development of women and children.
- Increase the number of girl's hostels, particularly in tribal areas.
- Strengthening the scope of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, set up in 2007.

Minorities & Weaker Sections

- Establishment of Navodaya Vidyalaya type schools for weaker sections in every block of the country.
- Continue funding the cost of education of SC and ST students, with priority to those whose parental income is less than Rs. 6 lakh per annum.

Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)

Education - Enroll and Excel

Under this BJP will take the following steps-

- NDA's flagship program 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan': Mechanism would be set up for its performance audit and to have real time information about its performance. Programme shall be strengthened and expanded with a goal to remove illiteracy.
- Universalization of secondary school education and skills development through functional school shall be seriously pursued with particular focus on rural, tribal and difficult areas.
- The content and process of school education shall be thoroughly reviewed to make it dynamic, stress-free, attractive and responsive to the emerging national needs.
- Girls shall be provided all possible help to continue and complete school education.
- The digital divide shall not be allowed to create further divisions in the learning situations of children.
- Special pedagogy would be developed for differently-abled students.
- On priority, a national modernization programme for madrasa's would be started.
- Mid-day meal scheme would be revitalized in terms of management and delivery.
- We will explore ways to reduce the daily burden of carrying books to school for children, which would also entail use of technology for education as a mission mode project.
- Establish a national E-Library to empower school teachers and students.
- Initiate a multi-country student exchange programme for broadening the horizon of school going children.
- Creative talents of students will be recognized and encouraged.
- Also BJP will set up a National Commission on Education to report in two years on the state of education and the reforms needed. Based on the report, BJP will implement a National Education Policy to meet the changing dynamics of the population's requirement with regards to quality education, innovation and research, aiming to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skills and knowledge and to eliminate the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry.

Health

- BJP will make school health program would be a major focus area, and health and hygiene will be made a part of the school curriculum.

- Also ensure a 'Swachh Bharat' by Create an open defecation free India by awareness campaign and enabling people to build toilets in their home as well as in **schools** and public places.

Reform the System

- Will use technology to reduce the burden of books on children. They will also make all institutions and schools e-enabled in a phased manner. Under their leadership, digital learning and training will be used extensively.

Minorities & Weaker Sections

- BJP will give special focus to children of such sections, especially the girl child, with regards to health, education and skills development.

Leap Forward

BJP has spoken about its commitment to address the issues related to children, like malnutrition and under-nutrition, problem of child labour, child-trafficking and missing children, sexual abuse, school dropouts and the increasing crime rate among juveniles.

BJP has said that it will take the following steps to ensure survival, development, participation and protection of children:

- (a) Lay special emphasis on vulnerable children and especially those belonging to the vulnerable communities like SCs, STs, OBCs, migrants, slum dwellers, street dwellers and those with disabilities.
- (b) Ensure effective implementation of the Right to Education, Right to Food Security Act.
- (c) Review, amend and strengthen the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2012 and Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS).
- (d) Focused efforts will be made to address issue of anaemia.
- (e) Reduce the burden of books on children without compromising on the quality of education.
- (f) Endeavour to inculcate values amongst children.

Youth

- BJP has committed among other things to set up neighbourhood Children's/ Youth Parliament across India that leads to vibrant student committees.

Promotion of Sports

- Steps would be taken by BJP to inculcate a culture of sports at the school level by arranging sports facilities and training needs for promoting a healthy lifestyle, and making sports as a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Women

- BJP will undertake the following for Women's Welfare:
 - Launch a national campaign for saving the girl child and educating her - Beti Bachao – Beti Padhao.
 - Structure a comprehensive scheme, incorporating best practices from past successes like Balika Samruddhi, Ladli Laxmi and Chiranjeevi Yojana to support encourage positive attitude amongst families towards the girl child.
 - Program for women healthcare in a mission mode, especially focusing on domains of Nutrition and Pregnancy - with emphasis on rural, SCs, STs and OBCs.
 - Appropriate measures would be taken to check female foeticide, dowry, child marriage, trafficking, sexual harassment, rape and family violence.

Aam Admi Party (AAP)



Education

- State provision of equitable access to high quality of education for all children (beginning with early childhood care) irrespective of their ability to pay.
- Strengthening of public education system through adequate budgetary allocations and recruitment and capacity building of teachers and administrators.
- Special provisions for girls, first generation learners, students from poor families and socially disadvantaged communities so as to ensure total enrolment, check drop-outs, high quality learning and non-discrimination within schools and access to higher educational facilities.
- Ensuring high-quality schools and higher education, for all children, irrespective of whether they are rich or poor.
- Involvement of the local community in the creation of a context-rooted curriculum and management of schools, with accountability of school/teachers to a local body like Gram Sabha or Mohalla Sabha.
- Focus of education system on learning outcomes and not on inputs. Reform DIET, SCERT to focus on learning outcomes. Revamp teacher education system.

Social Justice: Gender Justice

- AAP will adopt a zero tolerance approach towards sex selective abortion and work towards its complete eradication by strengthening legislation against its practice and implementation of strict punishments if violated; budgeting at Central, State and local level for initiating an extensive sensitization campaign.

Minorities & Weaker Sections

- Will ensure that Muslim children do not face any kind of discrimination while seeking admission in private and government schools.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPIM)



Education

- Public expenditure on education to be 6% of GDP.
- Implementing the Right to Education Act to provide free and compulsory elementary education.
- Amending the RTE to institutionalize the concept of neighborhood schooling, extending it beyond the elementary level and providing free education for all continuing students.
- Stringent action against private schools and elite institutions who fail to provide admission to children from economically weaker sections, Improving quality of schools and teachers, Central Government to assume the major part of the financial commitment for its implementation.
- Expanding secondary education to reduce dropouts; improving quality of education and infrastructure in SSA schools, allowing flexibility of rules, timing and other aspects to ensure retention of pupils in backward areas and for otherwise marginalized groups.
- Enacting legislation to regulate fees, admissions and curricula in private educational institutions.

Major Constitutional & Legislative Reforms

- Amend Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code so that it does not criminalize adult consensual relationships irrespective of sexual orientation.

Persons with Disabilities

- Making education at all levels inclusive
- Making Health facilities accessible and free for persons with disabilities.

Minorities & Weaker Sections

- Special emphasis to be laid on the education of Muslim girls; scholarships and hostel facilities should be substantially increased for Muslim girl students.
- Promoting the teaching of Urdu in schools; Publishing good quality textbooks in Urdu and filling vacancies of Urdu teaching posts.

Women & Children (with a separate section on children in the Manifesto)

- Putting in place a series of measures to prevent, curb and punish those responsible for the horrific increase in violence against women and children. These include:

- Accepting the Verma Committee recommendations which have been left out of the present amended law;
 - changes in educational curricula to include subjects related to gender equality;
 - victims of sexual violence and acid attacks through a fully funded rehabilitation scheme especially for children who are victims of sexual violence;
 - Strict implementation of the PCPNDT Act (against sex determination tests and female foeticide) and the activation of defunct monitoring committees.
- Enacting the new legislations against trafficking of women and children; strengthening the law for maintenance of women and children.
 - Promoting and fighting for social reform against prevalent anti-women, anti-girl child practices including those which occur in the name of religion or tradition and against the cultures of violence against women both in public and domestic spheres.
 - Universalization of the ICDS to cover all children from the age of 0-6 years. It will reverse all measures towards privatization of the ICDS; more allocations per child to ensure nutritious meals for children in anganwadis and in schools.
 - Expansion of The Right to Education Act to include all children from the age of 3-18 years. Special provisions for the inclusion of children with disability.
 - Amendments in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act) to remove the distinction between hazardous and non-hazardous work in order to ban all forms of child labour and to ensure implementation of schemes with additional allocations for the rehabilitation of all working children.
 - Special measures to close the continuing gap between adivasi, dalit children and socially vulnerable groups and communities and others through specific measures including additional allocations for setting up residential schools and hostels with modern facilities for scheduled tribe and scheduled caste children; stringent action against discrimination at any level.
 - Complete coverage of basic services, such as supplementary nutrition, immunization, pre-school non-formal education, regular health check-ups and quick referral services.
 - Take effective steps to trace missing children ensuring public reporting of the status of search.
 - Strict implementation of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.
 - Delegation of finances and powers to the National and State Commissions for the Protection of Children.
 - Provision of shelter and social services to street children.
 - Ensuring a total re-haul and reform of the juvenile justice system and institutions to sensitize them towards helping them reintegrate into society as responsible citizens.

Working Class

- Recognising all workers employed in different central and state government schemes like the anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHAs, mid day meal workers, para teachers, NCLP staff etc as 'workers' as per the recommendation of the 45 ILC and providing them with all attendant benefits including statutory minimum wages, social security benefits like pension etc and ensuring their trade union rights.

Food Security and a Hunger Free India

- Enact a Right to Food law with the following features:
 - The food supplies through ICDS and Mid-Day Meal Schemes will get higher allocations to ensure hot cooked nutritious meals and be brought under the Food Security law as a legal right.
 - Entitlements for food and nutrition for pregnant women and lactating mothers will be included in the law.

Samajwadi Party (SP)



Education

- Compulsory education for all at primary level will be ensured. Free text books to the students up to class VIII and girl students will be distributed two sets of uniform annually.
- Junior High Schools and Madarasas full-filling the norms, will be brought on the Grants List.
- New schools and colleges will be built specially in the backward Muslim majority areas.
- All the Para-teachers (Shiksha Mitra) working in the various schools of the State, will be regularized within next two years.
- New Polytechnic colleges will be opened in all the districts where there is no such institutions and there 10% seats will be reserved for the students belonging to that particular district.
- Hostel facility and free coaching will be ensured for poor students/economically weak students.
- Free laptops will be distributed to every student passing from 12th standard.
- Tablet PC will be provided to the students passing 10th standard.

Health

- Free medical facilities will be provided to the girl students enrolled in schools and colleges.

Minority

- A special provision will be made for muslim girls passing out from 10th standard. A total sum of Rs. 30000 will be provided to such girls for the purpose of either continuing their education or as a support in their marriage.

Youth

- In order to encourage sports, girls/boys will be selected right from the school stage. Their training, education and accommodation will be made free of cost. Students performing well in sporting activities will be given preference in jobs as well.