



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-second session

27 February–31 March 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Akshar Foundation, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **The Indian Education Model: A Holistic Approach For Securing The Rights Of Children**

To further progress in securing the Rights of Children around the world, Akshar Foundation would like to commend the Government of India's National Education Policy of 2020, which calls for holistic, green schools where students learn about and participate in sustainable development.

Akshar Foundation's traditional Indian education model was hailed by the UN Environment Programme (1) and World Economic Forum (2), awarded by the Earth Day Network (3), and amplified by the BBC, the Guardian United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Agence France-Presse, TIME, Al Jazeera, Reuters, Forbes and news outlets all over the world (4) for the innovative policy of "Plastic Schools Fees", as well as other pedagogical innovations aimed at the elimination of child labour and child poverty. Akshar Foundation's model – based on the "Nai Talim" education philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi – works to upgrade schools into centers for sustainable development. Schools become centers for children to learn about – and work towards achieving – the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Indian Education Model (5) places equal emphasis on academics and hands-on skills development, enabling students to "be the change (they) want to see in the world" to paraphrase M. Gandhi. The students work in the schools, tutoring, designing tests and learning aids, printing worksheets, building furniture, growing food, recycling plastic, designing clothes, and more. Former child labourers come back to school to receive training in literacy and academics, as well as practical skills development, where they often excel over more privileged children. With this inclusive approach, underprivileged children have a chance to thrive in schools.

During the pandemic, Akshar Foundation schools became centers for food distribution (6), with students participating in identifying homes with food insecurity, and in delivering rations to their homes. When two young girls were missing in the village – because of the holistic nature of the school which incorporates development and social work to build trust – other students quickly reported them missing to their Akshar Foundation school. Then teachers worked with the police to recover the girls from suspected grooming operations. A school that incorporates social work can protect children from many forms of abuse.

With this holistic paradigm of schooling – which addresses all of the needs of the child – the Akshar Foundation NEP 2020 Education Model has been effective in reducing dropouts, child labour, child marriage, and child trafficking, whilst increasing employability, literacy, and environmental awareness.

Soon after this traditional Indian model received global recognition, the Government of India opened an online portal for suggestions and best practices from around the nation, and implemented sweeping changes to its education system – the largest education system of any liberal democracy in the world. India's new National Education Policy of 2020 calls for holistic and green schools, with a focus on social work, skills development and technology. Akshar Foundation is working in partnership with the Government of India to implement this new policy in government-run schools. Therefore, to encourage this progress, we urge the Council to recognize or endorse the Indian Education Model as exemplified in Akshar's model as well as in the Government of India's National Education Policy of 2020, and help us transform all schools into centers for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and into guardians for the Rights of Children.

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(1) <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/can-plastic-bottle-be-ticket-education-india-yes>

(2) <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/05/this-indian-school-accepts-plastic-waste-instead-of-fees>

(3) [https://www.aksharfoundation.org/\\_files/ugd/dace7f\\_d93349c1d15f4a018f79ddcee2a8c6d7.pdf](https://www.aksharfoundation.org/_files/ugd/dace7f_d93349c1d15f4a018f79ddcee2a8c6d7.pdf)

(4) <https://www.aksharfoundation.org/media>

(5) <https://www.aksharfoundation.org>

(6) <https://www.eastmojo.com/ourcoronafighters/2020/04/02/how-an-assam-school-is-helping-needy-people-amid-covid-19-crisis/>