

Retention Report 2025: Ensuring Effective Implementation of the Right to Education RTE 12(1)(c)

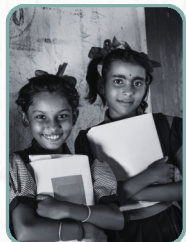
Overview

The Right to Education (RTE) Act 12(1)(c) mandates 25% reserved seats in private schools for children from economically weaker sections (EWS) and disadvantaged groups (DG).

However, access alone isn't enough. Continued enrollment and social inclusion are vital for ensuring meaningful educational outcomes.

The Indus Action Retention Survey 2025 evaluates the retention and inclusion of students admitted under this provision, offering vital insights into challenges and recommendations.

Key Findings



- **Strong Overall Retention:** 93% retention rate in 2023-24, though Chhattisgarh (80%) and Andhra Pradesh (86%) lag due to distance and cost barriers, while Uttarakhand and Odisha exceed 97%.
- **Gender Paradox:** Girls show higher enrollment retention (94% vs 91% for boys) but face more discrimination, with 19% feeling excluded from school events. This suggests parents are more likely to re-evaluate schooling for boys as compared to girls.
- **Persistent Costs:** Families still pay for transport, uniforms, and other expenses despite free education policies, which particularly impact Andhra Pradesh families.



Challenges Identified

- **Discrimination:** 13% of children face differential treatment, with girls most affected; 47% of Odisha parents report their children being overlooked for opportunities.
- **Access Barriers:** Long distances and administrative confusion around RTE processes hinder retention, especially in Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Hidden Costs:** 61% of parents still pay additional school fees despite free education policies, undermining accessibility.



Policy Recommendations

- **Fix Local Barriers:** Streamline reimbursement systems and eliminate hidden fees for truly free education.
- **Build Inclusive Schools:** Combat discrimination and create welcoming environments for all students.
- **Track and Respond:** Use real-time data to identify problems and deploy targeted interventions quickly.



Conclusion

Retention and inclusion should be treated as distinct outcomes, as retaining students does not guarantee their sense of belonging, nor does creating inclusive environments automatically prevent dropout. Future research should examine students' lived experiences in greater depth, exploring how schools can foster truly inclusive environments that support all children's academic and social development.

Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection

The survey used stratified random sampling across four states (Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh) with 6,000 respondents over 8 weeks via phone-based interviews, including regular quality checks.

Cohorts and Longitudinal Analysis

The survey tracked two cohorts: 2023-24 new RTE admissions and 2021-22 previously admitted students, enabling both current trend analysis and longitudinal comparison of retention and inclusion patterns.

Acknowledgments

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