

# As Air Quality Worsens, Global Scientist Urges Haryana to Lead with Mandatory Health Education for Children

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As air quality deteriorates across Northern India, posing serious health risks to children, the urgency for preventive health education has intensified. Dr Rahul Mehra, a prominent global scientist and India's National Representative for the UNESCO Chair in Global Health & Education, highlighted the opportunity for Haryana to pioneer solutions by implementing robust policy reforms, including mandatory health education for youth.



**Dr Rahul Mehra, National Representative of India for the UNESCO Chair for Global Health & Education, addressing the media at Press Club in Chandigarh**

*I strongly believe [health](#) education should be compulsory for children in their formative years, and towards this we have begun an experiment, and the initial results are encouraging,”* said **Dr Mehra**. Led by Founder & Executive Chairman Dr Mehra, Tarang Health Alliance in partnership with Fijeeha hosted a media workshop in Chandigarh to discuss the need of compulsory health [education in schools](#) of Haryana. *Haryana’s children deserve the same clean air as those in cities like Chicago, where AQI levels rarely exceed 50,”* **Dr Mehra** emphasized in the press meet *“But for our youth facing daily pollution levels upwards of 350 AQI, preventive health education can play a vital role in countering long-term health impacts and empowering the [next generation](#) to make informed health choices.*

*Haryana’s success in [sports](#) demonstrates that with the right policies, our children can excel – it’s time to extend this model to health education,”* added **Dr Navneet Anand**, Director

of Fijeeha, a development-focused communication platform.

Dr Mehra explained that, unlike treatment-based healthcare, preventive health [education](#) teaches children to adopt healthy behaviors, aiming to reduce the societal burden of health issues before they arise. Formerly a [research](#) scientist in Bio-Medical Engineering, Dr Mehra owns over 70 patents and has contributed over 100 publications.

Tarang Health Alliance's mission is ambitious yet focused, to bring health education into every classroom in [India](#), starting with Haryana and NCR region. In partnership with the Haryana government, Tarang has also [launched a pilot](#) program in 12 government schools, supplemented by efforts in 18 private schools in the NCR region, Chandigarh, and Jaipur. *This initiative, which covers physical, mental, and social [health](#), aligns with the state's broader welfare programs under the guidance of Haryanas Chief Minister, Shri Nayab Singh Saini,"* said Dr Mehra.

Under this program, children learn critical [health skills such as nutrition](#), hygiene, stress management, healthy relationships, and conflict resolution. *"Our pilot program has already shown promising results,"* Dr Mehra shared. *Students are demonstrating a greater understanding of health topics and are making healthier [choices](#). This shift reflects the power of a structured, curriculum-based approach to [health](#) education.*

The data from Haryana reflects the need for this intervention. Living in highly polluted environments, childrens lung capacity can be reduced by 20%, which is akin to the effects of long-term second-hand smoke exposure, according to UNICEF. Additionally, with six of the NCR cities identified as non-attainment [cities by the Commission for Air Quality](#) Management, Haryana's youth face severe health risks. *Our goal is to reach a point where health [education](#) is not an option, but a core subject in schools,"* said **Dr Mehra**. *We aim to have health [education](#) made compulsory for classes VI to VIII. These*

years are formative, and [empowering our children](#) with knowledge now will benefit their health, and our society, for years to come.

The program's [focus](#) on a holistic approach resonates with India's National Education Policy, which promotes a "**Swacch Bharat, Swasth Bharat**" (Clean India, Healthy India) ideal. *Health education not only supports a child's academic [growth](#) but also nurtures their physical, mental, and social well-being,*" Dr Mehra remarked. This approach is critical in making health a lifelong value for young citizens and aligns with the country's broader vision of 'Viksit [Bharat](#) '(Developed India).

With plans to scale the program nationwide, Tarang Health Alliance is hopeful that this [model will inspire](#) other states to integrate health education into their curriculums. *This is one of the most important [investments](#) in our country's future,"* **Dr Mehra** concluded. *If we can establish preventive health [education](#) as a priority, we can ensure that the next generation is healthier, more informed, and better equipped to contribute to a Viksit Bharat.*

As the community stakeholders rally around this cause, there is hope that such initiatives will inspire broader policy changes, creating a ripple effect that could transform the [health](#) landscape of the nation.

### About Tarang [Health](#) Alliance

Tarang Health Alliance is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting health education and preventive healthcare across [India](#). Since 2016, Tarang has focused on [raising awareness](#) and creating programs to improve children's physical and mental well-being. Through its advocacy for compulsory [health education](#), Tarang seeks to shape policies that will equip children with the tools they need to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

