



CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

22 July 2009

Press Release

School Vouchers for Girls: Enabling 400 Girls to go to a school of their choice

The School Choice Campaign launched its second voucher project on Wednesday, 22 July 2009 at the Sri Ram Mandir Hall, Welcome, North East Delhi amidst parents, local ward councilors, principals and NGO representatives. The event also saw the awards ceremony of the 400 voucher beneficiaries (girls) of the project who will receive vouchers worth up to Rs 4000 per annum for the next 4 years, ensuring the completion of their primary education in a school of their choice. These girls are from poor families and studying in standard II of state run schools. *The occasion also saw a detailed counseling session for the parents who would be choosing a school for their children for the first time. For the first time in India, perhaps, School choice Campaign also gave a Hand Book to the parents which contained a comparison chart of the services and facilities provided by the schools in their neighborhood. The event, was truly unique in that it not only enabled poor parents to send their children to English medium private schools but also empowered them to exercise their choice in an informed manner by providing them with necessary knowledge.*

The event was graced by the presence of local community leaders including Mr Divya Jaiswal (former Deputy Mayor Delhi), ward councilors Ms Uma Gangwar (Welcome Colony), Mr Vipin Kumar Sharma (Janta Colony) and Ms Bimla Sharma (Babarpur).

School Vouchers for Girls seeks to demonstrate the efficacy of the voucher idea in eradicating gender-based discrimination and in increasing parental involvement in the education of their children. By targeting a traditionally disadvantaged group – girl children from socio-economically disadvantaged families – this project hopes to demonstrate the empowerment potential of school vouchers while presenting a voucher model that governments can adopt to cater to the education needs special interest groups. ***By empowering the poor, by providing poor parents an opportunity to send their children to the kind of schools where their richer counterparts send their children to, school vouchers would achieve the twin objectives of ushering in social equity and better economic opportunities.***

The project will benefit poor girl children from the seven backward wards of North East Delhi – Welcome Colony, Chauhar Bangar, Zaffrabad, New Usmanpur, Maujpur, Janta Colony and Babarpur. This region has a high concentration of minority and socially backward communities and therefore the most appropriate to run a pilot project that is meant to benefit girl children. Enabling 400 girls from this area to go to better and English medium schools is the first step of a big revolution in the education sector.

The parents of the children who won the voucher scholarship were excited at the prospect of sending their children to English medium schools to complete their primary education and wished their other children would get a similar opportunity somehow. The local leaders who graced the occasion too appreciated the voucher idea and gave suggestions for similar projects in the future.

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K-36 Hauz Khas Enclave
New Delhi 110016
Voice: 2653 7456/2652
1882
Fax: 2651 2347
ccs@ccs.in www.ccs.in
www.schoolchoice.in
www.jeevika.org