



CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

10 September 2009

Press Release

Right to Education: Will it be enough?

A panel discussion on the recent legislation of the RTE Bill 2009

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2009 has been the single-most, significant legislative business in the recently concluded Parliament session. The Right to Education bill (as it is commonly known) is the enabling legislation to the Eighty-sixth Constitutional Amendment which guarantees education as a fundamental right to every child between the ages of 6 and 14 years in India. The legislation, passed unanimously by both Houses of Parliament, promises to transform the elementary education landscape. **The promise, potential and pitfalls of this historic legislation were central to the Student First! Dialogue Series held at the India Habitat Centre on 9 September 2009.**

The topic for the evening's discussion was Right to Education: Will it be enough? The panel of experts represented the fields of education, development work and public policy to provide a multidimensional perspective on the issues surround the Right to Education.

Mr Sam Carlson, Lead Education Specialist – World Bank, addressed the 'quality' aspect of the legislation. Mr Carlson raised interesting questions on the perception of quality in education as well as putting forth the case for considering socioeconomic factors, other than those determined by just school environment, to measure learning achievements.

Ms G Syamala, Executive Director – Action for Ability Development and Inclusion, shared her experiences working with the government to make the RTE Bill more inclusive, and outlined the challenges faced by children with disabilities. Ms Syamala argued that the access to education for persons with disabilities was not just hindered physically but also from mistaken attitudes.

Ms Yamini Aiyar, Director – Accountability Initiative (Centre for Policy Research), presented her views on how the accountability of the fundamental Right to Education will be guaranteed by this legislation and strongly impressed upon the need for local monitoring of this right. Ms Aiyar proposed that local monitoring bodies be given greater powers and resources to ensure greater accountability.

The discussion following the presentations addressed the challenges in quality, access and accountability facing the government and outlined ways and means to overcome the same. The event was one in the series of longstanding engagements for the School Choice Campaign with the Right to Education bill.

For more information on the legislation, analysis and research, please see here:
<http://schoolchoice.in/campaigns/rte.php>

STUDENT FIRST! Dialogue Series on Quality Education for All is a monthly forum for debate by the nation's foremost experts on national education policies and solutions to problems of quality in the education sector. The series, a joint initiative of the School Choice Campaign and India Habitat Centre will usher, for the first time in the country, a sustained constructive collaboration of ideas

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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

between the policy makers, leading economists, school leaders and other key stakeholders like parents, educationists, civil society bodies, NGOs working on education and the youth.

For details on the previous dialogues please log onto <http://schoolchoice.in/sfdialogue/index.php>

About the School Choice Campaign

School Choice Campaign seeks to achieve Right to Education of Choice for All. We believe that while the government has a constitutional mandate to educate every child, it cannot accomplish this task by building more government schools. It has to remain a sponsor and facilitator, and let edupreneurs execute the task of delivering the service. This will bring choice of schools even to the poor while improving the quality of education delivered through competition. Thus our slogan “Fund Students, Not Schools”.

For further information contact:

Baishali Bomjan, *Manager- PR and Communication*

Mob: 98713 66407; Email: baishali@ccs.in