



**Contact,
Uttar Pradesh:
Shri. Shamshad Khan**
*Founder Secretary/Director
CREDA*
Ph: +91 9415206651
samshad@sancharnet.in

**Contact, Delhi:
Ms. Anisha Gupta**
*Campaign Associate
School Choice Campaign*
Ph: +91 9873108057
anisha@ccs.in

Uttar Pradesh School Choice Campaign launched

Centre for Civil Society and CREDA launch campaign to secure quality education for the poor

Activists demand Fund Students, Not Schools!

Lucknow, Thursday, 4 July 2007:

The Centre for Civil Society, a public policy research and advocacy organisation, and the Centre for Rural Education and Development Action launched the Uttar Pradesh School Choice Campaign in Lucknow. The campaign advocates school vouchers to empower the poor to choose and demand better quality education for their children.

School voucher is a coupon of a specific amount that can be used to fund a child's education at any school chosen by the parent. In the existing system, government funds government schools directly which in turn provide free education to the child. According to the Centre, poor parents with no capacity to pay a private school's have no choice but to send their children to those schools.

"In many cities of UP, especially in the old city and slum areas, access to government primary schools is a problem. Many of these schools run out of rented and dilapidated buildings. In such a situation, vouchers become an essential tool to ensure access to education in the existing private schools", says Parth Shah, President, Centre for Civil Society.

To get the voucher, schools—government or private— have to compete and satisfy the parent. If the parents don't like the school, they can take their child (and the voucher) to another school. Parents decide and parents choose, not government. "UP has the largest number of underprivileged children, especially Dalits. Yet, the quality of education is the poorest in the country. The voucher system, in which money follows the student, is a way to ensure that parents are empowered to choose and demand better education." says Ritwik Patra, Senior Campaign Associate.

The Uttar Pradesh Campaign aims to reach out to more than ten million parents across the ten regions in Uttar Pradesh. School Choice Campaign is a national campaign. It is gaining ground in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Mr. Shamshad Khan, Director, CREDA says, "The campaign in UP will be a signature campaign followed by intensive social mobilisation at the village and taluka level. Local NGOs, Self-Help Groups, and volunteers will be the foot soldiers of our campaign." The campaign will be using cycle rallies, nukkad nataks and puppet shows to take the message to parents. They plan to create delegations of citizens to demand school vouchers from their elected representatives.