

REPORT FOR THE MONTH
OF

July 2012 - June 2013



Submitted by:

JOINT OPERATION FOR SOCIAL HELP (JOSH)

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Report for the Month of July 2012 to June 2013

During the month of July 2012 to June 2013 the following activities were done by JOSH:

1. a. Report on the Status of Right to Education Act in Delhi:

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education was passed in 2009 by the Government of India. It was notified and came into effect in the whole of the country on the 1st of April 2010. This Act makes delivery of quality education a fundamental right of all children between the age of 6- 14 years. This Act apart from listing down critical obligations of the State towards provision of education, also notified deadline for ensuring complete implementation.

The 31st of March, 2013 marked the end of the deadline provided by the RTE Act towards effective implementation. Given this, it was imperative that a study in undertaken to look at the status of implementation of the Act on the ground especially in the national capital of Delhi.

This study was undertaken by mobilizing more than 60 volunteers from different colleges and institutes of Delhi, like IIT Delhi, St. Stephens, Delhi School of Economics, LSR, Hindu, Ramjas, Delhi College of Engineering, RLA, TERI University etc. Some students from Presidency College Kolkata, NUS Singapore and Punjab University also participated.

A total of **1425 households** and 29 schools covered were covered across 7 areas in 6 districts of Delhi.

- a. Central District: Daryaganj
- b. North East District: Timarpur
- c. North West District: Rithala

- d. South West District: Munirka
- e. South District: Malviya Nagar
- f. South District: Nizamuddin Basti



The volunteers were inducted and trained by experts to undertake surveys in the different areas identified. After being trained, the volunteers made field trips during which, they not only collected relevant data in terms of the implementation of the RTE Act in the area, but also undertook awareness generation campaigns to inform parents, children and community about the different provisions of the Act.



The findings of the survey were collated by the student volunteers in form of papers which reflected the status of the respective areas surveyed. The papers were finally put together to form a status report of RTE Act in Delhi.

Some of the trends that the data projected about the status of RTE Act in Delhi are given below:

Access:

- Fees, in terms admission fees, still been charged reported by 11% parents
- 34% children reported that their teachers asked them to get money from home- ID cards, PTA funds, exam fees etc
- Presence of out of school children reported in many areas. High number found in Rithala and Nizamuddin Basti

Teachers:

- Shortage of teachers a trend across all districts of Delhi
- 73% of schools had contract teachers. Contract teachers have limited responsibilities and accountability which proves to be a major hurdle towards effective implementation of the Act
- Teachers not trained in Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), which has turned out to be affecting teaching quality and learning outcomes
- Teachers engaged in non teaching duties-election duty, polio campaign, census duty as well as clerical work within the school

Quality and Classroom Transaction:

- Quality of learning a huge concern across all areas- parents were found to rely on private tuition. On an average parents reported spending Rs.300-Rs. 400 on private tuition
- Provision of basic infrastructure facilities still a challenge. Basic facilities of clean toilet and potable water not present in most schools
- Only 35% children reported to have access to library facilities in school

- 72% children reported some form of extra curricular activities in schools. But, only 18% of children were given any sports equipments to play
- 46% of children reported corporal punishment
- However, positive response been that 85% children also reported that they liked their teachers

Inclusion:

- Only 23% of children reported that they have CWSN in their schools. Main reason been- denial of admission, 'pushed out' due to lack of care and adequate infrastructure facilities
- 80% of the schools did not have provision made for special teachers or special training for present teachers
- 78% parents reported receiving scholarship meant for their children, however, amount varied considerably
- Several cases of corporal punishment and discriminatory behavior reported in different areas, leading to children dropping out
- 46 % children recorded that the MDM served is of good quality. This response received mainly from children in South Delhi schools. Major problems noted in other areas

Community Participation and Grievance Redressal:

- In 99% of schools, School Management Committees (SMC)s have not been formed, except in the MCD schools of Trilokpuri
- 55% of parents reported that they have never been called for any parents meeting in the school

- 71% of parents responded that they don't complain even if they have any grievance. Reason cited- no GR mechanism, insulted and humiliated previously etc
- 70% of parents reported that there is no platform or space to raise grievances
- 70 % of parents when asked if they would like to given more space and scope to improve functioning of schools said 'YES'

1. b. National Youth Convention

The Third National Youth Convention on Youth and Democracy was held in the historic city of Udaipur on 21st and 22nd October 2012. The two day convention was attended by over 1,100 young participants from various corners of India, representing



both urban and rural centers of more than 15 states. It was organized by several prominent organizations in the social sector like MKSS, JOSH, School for Democracy, Astha, DAGAR and SR Abhiyan.

The two day convention was held to focus upon the crucial role of youth in strengthening a democracy. The convention started with a plenary on Democracy



and The Role of Youth. The plenary had eminent speakers like Prof. Prabhat Patnaik (Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi), Kamla Bhasin (Feminist activist and



author of several articles in *Women Unlimited*), P. V. Rajgopal (Ekta Parishad), Harsh Mander (Special Commissioner to the Supreme Court, and, Right to Food Movement), Bhanwar Singh Chandana (Aastha) and

Aruna Roy (MKSS and Right to Information Movement). The discussions of the plenary were then continued in the different workshops on various thematic issues like gender inequalities in the political processes, people's movements and people's politics, water-forest-land and *adivasis*, Right to information, democracy and political education, independent media as the fourth estate of democracy, workers rights and democracy rights, *Dalit* movements and subaltern voices, starvation and hunger in Independent India, towards participatory budget making, democratic spaces for dissent and expression, right to work and right to full wage, understanding participation and inclusion in democracy: by the people-of the people and for the people, challenges of urban poverty, law and justice, minority freedoms, and social audit: our money and our accounts.

The main objective of these workshops was to create a general understanding on these issues, highlight the challenges in these areas, outline the role that the youth can play in addressing these concerns, and finally, to draw out a plan of action.

The evening of the first day witnessed the celebration of different expressions of democracy. It brought together an energetic performance by the famous Langa and Manganiyars, a Bharatnatyam dance performance by Priya Srinivasan, recital of soulful songs by Vinay Mahajan and Charul Bharwada and finally an intense one act



play by Ojas dedicated on the hunger fast of Irom Sharmila and the atrocities of AFSPA.



The second day of the convention, started with the plenary titled, *'Samaj, Abhivyakti aur Badlao ki Aor'* (towards understanding, expression and

change'). This panel was enriched by the presence of eminent speakers like Justice Murlidhar (Delhi High Court), Usha Ramanathan (human rights lawyer), Prof. Tripurari Sharma (National School of Drama), Dr. Reetika Khera (Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi), Vinay Mahajan (Loknad), Ginny Srivastava (Ekal Mahila Sangathan), Satyendra Rajan (Centre for study of Developing Societies), Shankar Singh (MKSS), Anwar Khan (Manganiyars) and Kamla Bhasin. They outlined the need for creating understanding on different issues, rightful expression of the issues, and moving towards a positive change.

The panel discussion was followed by a consolidation session which had young activists who have been part of different movements and issues coming forward to share their resolutions and action plans. This included people like Bhanwar Meghwanshi (dalit activist and DAGAR),



Kamal Tonk (RTI Manch Rajasthan), Ankita Anand (Aatish- theatre person), Aheli Chowdhury (JOSH), Inayat Sabhikhi (National Campaign for People's Right to Information), Paras Bhanjara (independent activist working on the issues of nomadic tribes), Ojas S.V, Naveen Narayan (Action Aid, Delhi), Chaitanya (Social Audit Unit, Andhra Pradesh) and Hari Om Soni (Aastha, Udaipur). They

all shared how they will be taking forward the agenda of broad-basing democratic spaces and practices in all the activities in their respective fields of work.



The Third National Youth Convention brought together participants from different backgrounds who shared their experiences of life and work with each other. It was an interesting mix of people ranging from urban students of various colleges in Delhi, Mumbai, Udaipur, Ahmedabad, to urban poor youth and students from slums in Delhi to those from nomadic tribes and rural areas. Their interactions helped in breaking the barriers of mindset and in understanding each others' concerns, achievements and challenges. This convention has motivated all of us to open up more such spaces where youth from across the country can get the opportunity to of meaningful interaction with each other and also with experts.

2. Intervention Involving Urban Poor Youth:

This intervention aims to work with urban poor youth of two resettlements colonies of Trilokpuri and Kalyanpuri to engage and capacity build them such that they can raise issues of their community.

2. a. Youth Resource Center:

As part of this youth of the area are mobilised and capacity build through regular English speaking classes. These regular classes, apart from aiming to enhance English speaking skills, mainly aims to mobilise the youth towards understanding different issues in a rights based framework. Therefore, there is a 90 days curriculum which mainly looks at enhancing skills of English speaking of the youth and is interspersed with different thematic workshops and trainings sessions which helps in capacity building these youth to take up different issues of the community.

2.a.i. Capacity Building sessions:

As part of the capacity building initiative of JOSH of youth, a YOUTH RESOURCE CENTER (YRC) is supported in the community. YRC forms the platform to bring youth of the area together for English Speaking course. Although this 90 days course forms the basis of the intervention, however, holistic capacity building of the youth to understand rights based approach to governance remains at the center of the discourse.



These training were planned and facilitated by resource person to develop the perspective and also for capacity building in social understanding for youth volunteers:

S No	Theme of the training program
1	Team work and Volunteerism
2	Leadership
3	Personality Development
4	Human Rights
5	Civil liberties
6	Team Building

2.a.i. I. Team work and Volunteerism:

Training on team work and volunteerism was organized on 17th June 2012 by Youth Resource Centre for the youths to make them understand about the team work and its importance in the social work. Around 60 youths from YRC and 10 youth from the community participated in the training. This training was facilitated by Ms. Pooja Chandra, leading advocate of Delhi High Court and Mr. Sunit Madhur CEO of Cicero Associates (An organization working with elected representatives in different states of India). The activities like broken square and Johari window were done in groups as team building exercises. The youths participated in the training enthusiastically and also learned from the activities and the resource person.



II. Leadership Training:

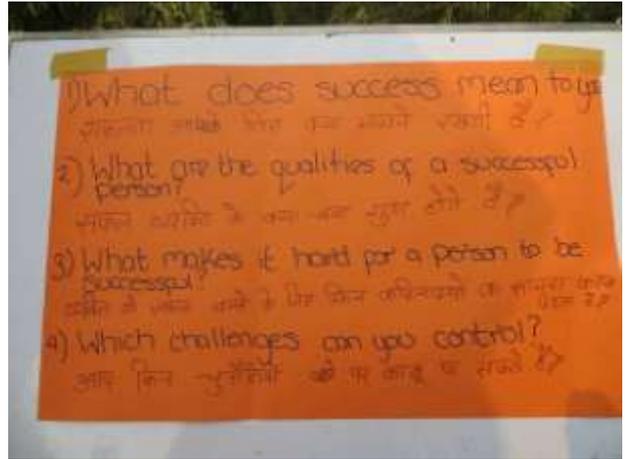
Capacity building training on leadership and community service was organized on the 15th of August, 2012. This session was planned such that volunteers along with discussions also express themselves through activities and celebrations. The session was facilitated by local leaders who have lead different initiatives and contributed to community services. The exercise also included discussions around issues of democracy, understanding meaning of freedom and independence.



Apart from targeted capacity building trainings, the youth volunteers are encouraged to participate in different activities such that they can gain exposure and learn through activity.

III. Session on Personality development:

A session on personality development was organized on 15th November 2012 by YRC for the youths to make them understand the importance of the personality in the context of employment opportunity and also to discover their true self. Around 70 youths from YRC participated in the training.



This training was facilitated by Mr. Aviel and Terasa from Google, USA; both are experienced in the field of Technical development; however Terasa’s experience was more inclined in the field of education.

This workshop was helpful for the youths to understand the importance of personality development in relation to their career. These facilitators used different methods to make the workshop informative and interesting for the trainees. The volunteers liked all the methods; most of the volunteers were interested in the activity “Our Nation, Our Leader”. In this activity, some of the volunteers were given their Presidential Candidate speech in front of all the other



volunteers. After the speech, the volunteers were advised to select a good President for our nation according to the promises and rationale given by the speakers.

The youths participated in the training enthusiastically and also learned from the activities and the resource person.

IV. Training on Human Rights:

Training on Human Rights was organized on 23rd December 2012 by Youth Resource Centre for the youths to make them understand about the human rights and its importance in the social work. Around 65 youths from YRC and 10 youth from the community participated in the training.



This training was facilitated by Mr. Manoj Katiyar, Director of YHRI- Youth For Human Rights India and Ms. Josna, a founder-member of the same organization working for the building of youth capacities in the context of human rights.



The activities like lectures and sharing of inputs about the fundamental rights and also a self-assessment exercise were conducted by the mentioned resource persons where the youths participated enthusiastically and also learned extensively from the activities.

V. Understanding Civil liberties:

Training on civil liberties was organized by YRC for the youths to make them understand the importance of the civil liberties and also about the emergence of the ideology of the civil liberties in the context of Emergency period of India. This

training was facilitated by Mr. Prabhakar Sinha the president of People's Union for Civil Liberties. He shared his experiences with the youth which triggered their thoughts to rethink development of nation within the frame of civil liberties. The volunteers liked to hear from him about the condition of the nation during the time of emergency and also the emergence of the need for a civil space.



VI. Training on Team building:

Training on team building was organized by Youth Resource Centre for the youths to make them understand about the importance of team building and collectivization. The volunteer's exposures always strengthen their idea about the team work and also collectivization effort in bringing social change. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen their ideas through input session includes theoretical perspective building on team work. The activities like lectures and sharing of inputs about the team building and also a self-assessment exercise were conducted.

2.b.ii. Capacity Building through Volunteerism:

I. Participated in RTE gathering at Jantar Mantar:

The youth volunteers of YRC took part in gathering at Jantar mantar on 4th April. The gathering was organized to demand the state for the proper implantation of RTE. In this around **65 volunteers** of YRC took part in this. The volunteers actively participated in the gathering by signing their self scripted songs on status of implementation of RTE in different government schools.

II. Volunteered in Pension Parishad Campaign:

Pension Parishad is an alliance formed of several citizen groups and individuals to demand for universalization of pension scheme in the country. As part of this demand making a five day sit in was organized at Jantar Mantar where older citizens across several states gathered. Considering the gravity of the appeal and the linkage of the demand to our work amongst the poorer neighborhoods in Delhi, JOSH supported and participated in the program. As part of our participation, around 55 YRC volunteers actively took part for five days from 6th May to 11th May 2012. Participation of the volunteers in this program helped them to understand the issue of pension and the need for demanding for universal entitlement of such a social security scheme to all citizens of the country.



YRC volunteers supported the sit-in in many ways- from taking on the responsibility of logistical arrangements, registration of all participants, to documenting case studies of deprived old people to being part of the communication team. Therefore through such active participation the youths learned the strategies and different ways of advocacy at macro level.

III. Volunteer Support for Right to food campaign:

The main ideology of the Youth Resource Centre is to develop the volunteerism among the youths towards active citizenship in our society. In this organization always open the space to “learn by doing” process. The volunteers usually engage with different National campaigns which are struggling to bring the social change in our nation. YRC volunteers actively engaged in the Right to Food campaign, they

done legislative advocacy process under this campaign. The legislative advocacy process is to sensitize the people representatives about the social problems. Under this the volunteers met lot of Member of Parliament and they share the importance of this campaign and social problems.

The volunteers get an enrich experience from this activities, in which they directly had a dialogue with the elected representatives of our nation. In addition this exercise taught the volunteers and given an idea about the governance of our nation.



2.c. Aaina- Theater Festival, 2013:

JOSH organized the Aaina theater fest 2013 on 17th Feb 2013. Continuing the tradition, JOSH welcomed hundreds of spectators on February 17, 2013 to celebrate the tradition of the community theater festival for the people – Aaina.

Aaina, which literally means a mirror, is an annual theater festival that serves as a venue for community members, activists, development workers, journalists, theater groups, and volunteers to bring to life social issues that need to be addressed.



The main objective of the festival is to voice issues of social importance amongst the communities in ways that not only entertain but also to promote awareness; which is why it was important to host it in the heart of the largest resettlement colony in East Delhi, specifically in Subhash Market, Trilokpuri. Since it started, it has earned a solid reputation amongst the people and has become one of JOSH's strongest medium for advocacy and recruitment of youth volunteers. It has been attended by over 800 people and has set a trend by bringing together theater groups from different colleges, professional groups, and community-based performers. Through Aaina, several key issues were raised such as poverty, female feticide, domestic violence, corruption, communal riots, and inequity of education.



This year, the famous performance of 'Insaan Hain Hum' by Vinay Mahajan and Charul Bharwada from Loknad of Ahmedabad, Gujarat was staged. They performed their self-composed songs on communal harmony that document the lives of marginal communities.



Abhivyakti, the Dramatic Society of Indraprast College for Women was invited to present during the festival. They were first to take the stage and they kept the audience enthralled with their 2012 'Aap Seditonist Hain' street routine.



The festival also featured the performances of the volunteers from JOSH's Youth Resource Center (YRC) and its new folk rock band. JOSH has always believed in the creative ways of reaching out to the community and making them aware. The idea of this music band is to compose music and songs by youth living in the slums and resettlement colonies, and bring out the issues from the ground and their everyday reality.

Some Media Stories on the work:

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Govt schools fleecing parents

SURVEY Despite free education till class 8 under the RTE Act, schools taking money from parents on various pretexts

SCHOOLS OF SCANDAL



• The survey was conducted by students of Delhi University and IIT, Delhi, in collaboration with an NGO. JASJEET PLAHA/HT FILE PHOTO

11% parents charged admission fee
34% parents were asked money for ID cards, PTA fund, exam fee, etc

99% schools did not have school management committees, which are mandated by the RTE Act
46% children said corporal punishment was normal in school

55% of parents said that they had never been called for any parents' meeting in the school
70% of parents said that there was no platform or space to raise grievances
23% of children said that they had differently-abled children in their schools.
80% of the schools did not have provision for special educators
78% parents got scholarship meant for their children. However, amount varied considerably from school to school

Mallica Joshi
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NEW DELHI: Nearly 34 per cent parents of children studying in schools run by the MCD and Delhi government have been asked to pay money on one pretext or another. This despite the fact that as per the Right to Education Act, all students have a right to get free education till class 8.

The excuses given by the school authorities ranged from student identity cards, parent-teacher funds and even examination fee, a survey by students of Delhi University and IIT, Delhi have found.

The survey, conducted in association with NGO Joshi, found that at least 46% of students in such schools said corporal punishment was common in their school.

Nearly 60 volunteers from DU and IIT worked with the NGO in a five-month-long exercise to assess the conditions at MCD and Delhi government schools.

The students reported that out of the 1,425 households they surveyed, 34% were asked to pay a certain amount to the teachers for things like students identity cards, parent-teacher Funds and examination fee.

According to the survey, which covers 29 schools from seven districts of Delhi, asking students to get money under one pretext or another is still prevalent in a number of schools. In around 11% of the schools, the survey says, admission fee is also charged.

The survey report looks at a number of issues such as the formation of school management committees, which are

supposed to increase the participation of parents in school management, parent-teacher meetings, grievance-redressal systems, school infrastructure, status of special education and scholarships as well as corporal punishment.

"The point that emerges very strongly from this study is the need for effective time-bound grievance redressal mechanism to deal with the overwhelming violations that are happening on the ground," said Aheli Chowdhuri, member, Joshi. For students who participated in the study, the experience was an eye-opener.

"It is a call for action for people like us who are privileged and can change things at the grassroots," said Kinshu Dang, a second-year student at Ramjas College.

Violations of RTE in Delhi schools, reveals survey

'Need for effective time-bound grievance redressal mechanism to deal with violations that are happening on the ground'

Gurav Vivek Shrivastava

NEW DELHI: A study on implementation of the Right to Education Act in Delhi in three years of its existence has revealed "overwhelming violations" of the act on the ground.

The study by NGJ Joshi, with support of VCEI India, has noted that while "75 per cent of the schools had contract teachers", in 79 per cent of schools, the School Management Committees (SMCs) have still not been formed.

It has also exposed concern of the treatment meted out to students in many schools. It said "86 per cent of children reported corporal punishment, and 58 per cent of parents reported that they have never been called for any parents' meeting in the school."

RTE, 75 per cent of parents responded that they don't complain even if they have any grievance. The reason cited by them being that either there was no grievance redressal mechanism or they had been intimidated and humiliated by school authorities in the past.

The survey also revealed that "teachers are engaged in non-teaching duties such as election, padayatra, rallies as well as manual work within the school" and for the parents the capacity of learning remained a huge concern across all areas. This despite their spending Rs.300 to Rs. 800 on private tuition.

In Delhi schools, the provision of basic infrastructure facilities was "still a challenge".

The survey has also dealt with concern the approach towards the differently abled

students in Delhi schools. "Only 25 per cent of children reportedly identified children as differently-abled children in

their schools, main reason being denial of admission, 'pushed out' due to lack of care and adequate infrastructure facilities."

Further, it said, 80 per cent of the schools did not have provision made for special teachers or special training for general teachers.

Even in the case of scholarship, the survey said "several case studies revealed that parents were made to sign no receipt and later no money was given". Only 24 per cent parents reported receiving scholarship amount for their children.

The study was conducted in seven areas of six districts with the help of student volunteers drawn from premier colleges like Lady Shri Ram College, G.D. St. Stephen's College, Hindu College, Ramjee College, Sant Lal Arya College, IIT Delhi, Delhi College of Engineering, DCE University and Delhi School of Economics.

A total of 1,425 households and 29 schools were covered by the volunteers in Durgam, Tomarpur, Bithala, Motika, Malviya Nagar, Narela and Trilokpur areas of Delhi and the students then wrote separate papers describing the status of the implementation of the fundamental right to education in the areas visited by them.

In its report, NGJ Joshi said, "The findings of the study clearly show the status of the RTE Act in the National Capital. The point that emerges very strongly from this study is the need for effective time bound grievance redressal mechanism to deal with the overwhelming violations that are happening on the ground."

Elaborating on the issue, it said, "The RTE Act makes

education a fundamental right, therefore, while efforts are made to improve provision, there needs to be a mechanism which will provide children, parents and committees a space to raise their concerns when violations happen. At present, no such mechanism is there and children and parents are completely clueless when to go when they are denied access to quality education."

The report was released on Thursday in the presence of Chairperson of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights Shashi Sheela, Professor Anurag Saxena of Delhi University, National Director of NCEEA, Dr. Roshika Khosla of IIT Delhi, Ramesh Vaswani of VCEI, Member Group of Human and Gender, Sec of RTE Forum among others.

Parents for good education

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Divya Gupta, an M. Phil student of Delhi School of Economics, who conducted survey in Central Delhi and while her desire to be present wrong on the stereotype created about government schools remained unfulfilled, she was enthused by the response of several parents.

"There was this school run by Sikh missionaries that had a large number of

Muslim students and when I interviewed their parents they had no reservation in sending their children there. Their main concern was providing good education to their wards," she said, adding that it were such responses which surprised her.

She said the manner in which poverty and issues of safety and distance prevented many from sending their children to bigger and better schools was also noticed by her.

Red marks in RTE report card

Schools Struggle With Dropout Rate, Poor Facilities: Survey

Maria Akram | TNN

New Delhi: Is the Right to Education a basic right or just a scheme? With the implementation of RTE completing three years on March 31, there's very little to show.

To assess the status of its implementation, the Joint Operation for Social Help, JOSH, initiated a study in Delhi schools. The survey carried out in seven areas covering 1,425 households and 29 schools threw up some startling findings.

"The point that emerges is the need for an effective, time-bound grievance redressal mechanism to deal with the violations on the ground. The Act makes education a fundamental right. While efforts are on to improve provisioning, there's need for a mechanism to provide children and parents a space to raise their concerns. There's no such mechanism. Children and parents are clueless where to go when they're denied quality education," Abhijit Choudhary of JOSH said.

In 99% of the schools, management committees haven't been formed, barring the MCD schools of Trilokpuri. These committees are supposed to be similar to parent-teacher associations. Apparently a delay in the notification of Delhi State rules held up their formation. But more than a year after these rules were notified, no official order on formation of such panels has reached

RIGHT OR RUSE?

A survey conducted by NGO JOSH on the implementation of the Right to Education Act has thrown up some startling finds



Survey covered 1,425 households and 29 schools in six districts

11% parents said they're still being charged admission fees

78% parents received variable amounts as scholarships for their children. Many were made to sign receipts beforehand, but no money was given

34% children were asked to get money from home for ID cards, PTA funds, exam fees etc

46% children had faced corporal punishment and many dropped out because of this

55% parents were never called for any parents-teacher meeting

25% schools have no functional toilets in

99% of MCD schools have no school management committees

70% parents said there is no grievance redressal mechanism

23% children said they have differently-abled schoolmates

80% schools don't have teachers for children with special needs

Teachers said **non-teaching work take up most of their time**

Most parents still spend **Rs 300-400 on private tuition**

schools. More than 70% of students say they don't complain, if they have problems with a

teacher. A lack of awareness among children and parents about the RTE Act remains a

School shockers

• Neha, a student of Nagar Nigam Prathamik Vidyalaya, was beaten up by her teacher over a trivial matter. She was hospitalized for two months, her mother, a resident of Moti Lal Nehru Camp, Munirka, said.

• Babita Khatun, studies in Nagar Nigam Sector-5, Rithala. This 11-year-old girl often cleans toilets in her school, her mother Bulchera Bibi says.

• Sumit of Begampur, Malviya Nagar, dropped out from Class II because of constant bullying. He works at a barber shop now. He says his teachers didn't help when he complained

major impediment.

"Access to free and compulsory education is limited. Especially in terms of denial of admissions based on documents, admission, and other fees being charged, denial of admission to children with special needs and lack of provisions to retain them meaningfully in schools," she said.

She added that school dropouts remained the biggest problem. No functional toilets and corporal punishment have emerged as key reasons for students dropping out. In 25% of schools, there are no functional toilets. Parents stop sending their daughters to them as a result and 30% of schools do not provide clean drinking water.

How DU, IIT students found out that RTE is just a trophy act

by **Pallavi Polanki** Jan 22, 2013

When the news is bad or doesn't fit a pre-determined agenda, it can be rest assured that the powers that be will either bury the message or shoot the messenger.

So when an NGO submits a report on how abysmally Delhi has fared in its implementation of the Right to Education Act, it is dismissed as an anti-government ploy.

But an independent study being conducted by students from Delhi's top colleges – not as part of their academic curriculum but as an exercise to see first-hand how far the government has delivered on its promise to ensure quality education to every child – will be difficult to dismiss as just another 'NGO report'.

Fifty students from colleges including Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi School of Economics, Lady Sri Ram and St Stephen's have conducted an in-depth study of government schools in six districts of Delhi. From each district 200-odd families – residents of a slum or a resettlement colony – were interviewed on school infrastructure, quality of the mid-day meals, water and toilet facilities, teachers, cleanliness, the role of principal and so on.



A student conducting the survey. Image courtesy: Pallavi Polanki

The trends emerging from the six surveys, which will be converted into six reports that will be published in mid-March, are anything but encouraging, say students.

"It has been three years since the RTE Act was passed and it is very shocking that the national Capital is one of the worst performing states when it comes to RTE implementation," says Abhishek Upadhyay, an electrical engineering student from IIT-Delhi and also coordinator of the project.

The surveys have been conducted in Rithala (North West), Nizamuddin and Malviyanagar (South), Timarpur (North), Daryaganj (Central), Munirka (South West) and Trilokpuri (east).

Commenting on some of the early trends, Upadhyay says: "Mid-day meals are a big concern in schools in all areas, except in South Delhi. In many schools, children are bringing their lunch boxes. Cleanliness is another major issue. While there are separate toilets for girls and boys, they are not clean. Schools have infrastructure but their maintenance is poor."

South Delhi, he says, stands out for its better performance in infrastructure and quality of teaching staff. "South Delhi has performed better than all other districts. But most districts are doing really badly. As for quality of teaching, the less said the better. Where children are going for private tuitions, they are able to read or write. If this is the scenario in the Capital, other states have very little to model themselves on," he says.

But as Upadhyay, points out, the project was equally about getting out of their comfort zone and confronting the reality that majority of Delhi's residents are living in localities and getting education which is much poorer in standard than what they are

used to. So what did India's most privileged – products of some of the country's best educational institutes – make of their visits to government schools, where India's most disadvantaged go to study.

Jyoti Shorewala, 22, is a Masters student at the Delhi School of Economics, was part of an eight-member which surveyed two bastis comprising largely Dalit migrants, in Timarpur, North Delhi. The team interviewed 250 families and visited four government schools in the area.

"Timarpur is just a couple of kilometers from the main campus of Delhi University (DU)... When we spoke residents from the slums they told us that a Class IX student can barely write his name. This is the plight of students who go to government schools in this area. Will they ever get a chance to study in a university? How will they compete with students coming from good schools, private schools," says Shorewala.

The experience, says Shorewala, who went to Delhi Public School in Ghaziabad, has fundamentally altered her perspective on why disadvantaged children fare poorly. "I always felt that their parents didn't consider education important. But that is not the case. A lot of parents want their children to be enrolled in private schools even though it is expensive. But they encounter so many procedural hurdles. The government departments are not helping them in getting the documents. And the attitude of private schools towards such children is very discouraging and totally uncalled for. They definitely want a better life for their children, but due to social and economic problems they are finding it hard."

While some things have changed post the implementation of the Act, Shorewala says lack of awareness about the various provisions of the RTE Act – not only among parents but also school authorities themselves – remains the big challenge. For instance, the survey found that none of the schools had even heard of, let alone formed, School Management Committees (SMCs).

"The intent behind the SMCs was to bring parents on board and make them part of the decision-making process. But such committees are non-existent. Schools are not even aware of it. The Act says that schools have to form SMCs, arrange for awareness programmes and enroll parents in such committees. But that is not happening," says Shorewala.

Asked about infrastructure standards in the schools, Shorewala says: "As per our data, we found that 50 per cent of the parents said they were satisfied. The reason why I think 50 per cent said they were satisfied is because they have no other option. Parents are not aware about quality of the mid-day meals that is being served or about the lack of cleanliness in the schools. Many said that children were carrying lunch and water bottles to schools to avoid the mid-day meals because there have been cases where students have fallen ill after eating the meals."

The six survey reports will be published in March by Joint Action for Social Help (JOSH), a youth initiative that has been running an RTE public awareness project in East Delhi.

Upadhyay guarantees that the reports will be hard-hitting and revealing. "All those involved in this project are smart and energetic students. Our expectations are high." The project, he adds, has strengthened their commitment to working in the field of primary education.

"A lot of advocacy will need to be done to improve the implementation of RTE Act. We hope that if this exercise is repeated every year we will be able to find cause-effect relationships that could help identify areas that need the most attention."

<http://www.firstpost.com/india/rte-deadline-unrecognised-schools-to-shut-down-not-erring-govt-schools-594866.html>

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RTE deadline: Unrecognised schools to shut down, not erring govt schools?

by **Pallavi Polanki** Jan 20, 2013

New Delhi: The president of an association of private schools in Delhi offers to tell a joke when asked why he believed the government wasn't justified in shutting down schools that don't meet the minimum quality standards that have been prescribed by the Right to Education Act.

Relating what turns out to be an improvised version of a popular tale attributed to French revolution history, Jain ridicules the government but in doing so exposes the double-standards of a society that believes that when it comes to the poor sub-standard quality of education is inevitable and acceptable.

"Let me tell you a joke. A French queen came to India. When she saw people crying, she asked why they were crying. She was told they were hungry and didn't have bread to eat. So the French queen said, 'Why can't they have butter?'" says Jain before proceeding to make his point. "In the name of quality education, you cannot shut down schools...People who make laws inside closed doors, don't know the ground realities. These schools are a social necessity." Jain is the president of the Delhi State Public Schools' Management Association.

Jain is referring to 1593 unrecognised schools in Delhi (as per a Municipal Corporation of Delhi survey quoted in a 2012 education report) which, should the government keep its promise not to extend the three-year RTE deadline which expires in March 2013, will have to shut-down or face a one-time fine of Rs 1 lakh and Rs 10,000 for every additional day. As per the MCD survey, 1.64 lakh children study in these unrecognised schools.

Jitendra K Jha is a founder and principal of one such school that is situated in Sant Nagar, an unauthorized residential colony in Burari in North Delhi.

Premier Public School, which now runs classes upto Class VII, started as a three-room structure in 2001. Its application in 2007 for recognition was rejected because it failed to satisfy the minimum land requirements. The school is built on 200 square metre (which used to be the norm), but in 2007 the minimum land requirement for running a primary school was increased to 800 square metre.

A decade after it was started, Premier Public School with its poorly built two-storey structure whose courtyard doubles up as a playground is unlikely to get an education officer's nod for meeting infrastructure and building standards of Right to Education (RTE) Act. But Jha insists that other than the land shortfall, his school meets RTE quality standards.

"We are holding talks with the government to give us recognition. We met the education minister on Thursday (January 17). They have asked us to wait for another two weeks," says an optimistic Jha. He is yet to inform parents of the 250 students who study in his school that it might shut down soon because it is unrecognised.



Premier Public School a private school is to be shut down soon. Naresh Sharma/Firstpost

Schools such as Premier Public School cater to parents who don't want to send their children to government schools but at the same time are not able to afford established private schools. Premier Public School charges a monthly fee between Rs 250 and Rs 400.

Unrecognised schools are not without serious problems. "One, unrecognised schools operate in small bastis out of one- two- and three-room houses. Their teachers are not all qualified, the schools are not open to inspection. And how will children from these schools gain admission in a recognized school or take their board exam?" says Saurabh Sharma of Joint Action for Social Help (JOSH), a voluntary organization that runs an RTE public awareness project in a resettlement colony in East Delhi.

Recognized private schools refuse to admit children from unrecognised schools because they do not have a valid school certificate. This is a problem the Premier Public School's principal too admits to. "Parents do find it difficult to get admission in recognized private schools because they ask for a certificate."

Senior lawyer and well-known right to education activist, Ashok Agarwal had filed a PIL in 2006 seeking the closure of unrecognised schools in Delhi. "The High Court in its judgment made it clear that unauthorized schools have no right to exist. And they were given six months to either fall in line or shut down. If they satisfy the norms, they are welcome to carry on," says Agarwal.

Expressing disappointment at the government's failure to decisively clamp down on unrecognised schools even after three years of the RTE Act, Agarwal says: "For the first time a school has been defined by law. And if the government is going to permit these so-called schools to continue it means they are degrading the definition of a school."

When parents are asked why they send their children to an unrecongised school such as Premier Public School, the most common response is proximity of the school. But do they know that the school is unauthorized and that their child will be at a disadvantage when he or she applies to another school?

Says Dilip Kumar, a parent, "Even if we know that the school is unrecognised, what choice do we have? We don't have an option of a school that provides better facilities in this neighbourhood."

Angered by the government's move to shut the school down, Kumar says, "Does the government school have any amenities at all? Whatever little we have, the government wants to ruin. If this private school is shut down, what will we gain from going to the government school? I would rather keep my children at home and teach them a trade."

While parents are keen on quality of education for their children they find themselves compelled to opt for what is available.

Shiv Chandra Jha, another parent, says he approves of minimum quality standards for running schools: "These norms are good. But none of the private schools here adhere to them. They are small schools with limited space, they don't have playgrounds and other such facilities."

Asked what they will do if the school shuts down, they say they will apply to other private schools. The government school located about a kilometre away simply doesn't figure as an option.



Two toilets for 250 children. Naresh Sharma/Firstpost

Says Mamta Chauhan, whose two children go to Premier Public School, "We will try and put our children in another private school. It is not a question of how much the fees is. We want a good education for our children. The main thing is discipline, which is absent in government schools. Teachers themselves are missing in government schools." She adds: "Our children's future is unsafe in a government school. Not only is it far away, I feel no one is serious about education there. We are happy here. My children have been studying here for three years now."

But not all parents who send their children to the 1000-odd unrecognised schools in Delhi will be able to afford sending their children to an expensive recognized private school. They will be left with no option but to apply in the nearest government school. And that is where the big problem is.

The government, say activists, has utterly failed to open new schools or even upgrade its infrastructure in existing schools to meet standards of quality the RTE Act makes compulsory.

"When the RTE Act came into force, it was said that unrecognised schools would have to shut down because they don't satisfy RTE standards – in terms of having playground, toilets, student-teacher ratio and so on. It was also said the government will open new schools. But the problem is that while the process of shutting down has begun, the government has made no arrangement for the transfer of these children. Not only have they not opened new schools they have not even upgraded existing schools so that children can be absorbed into them," says Sharma of JOSH.

Can the government guarantee the right to education of child that is going to an unrecognised school? The prospect looks bleak. Especially, when government schools are already facing a crisis of over-crowding.

Take for example, the Nigam Prathmik Bal/Balika Vidyalay (municipal corporation primary school) in Sant Nagar, located about a kilometer from the Premier Public School. It has reportedly seen a five-fold increase in the number of students in the last ten years. But its infrastructure hasn't kept up the massive increase in student strength.

The school runs in two shifts – a morning shift for girls with 2000-odd students and an afternoon shift for boys with 1300-odd students. It is ten teachers short of meeting the requisite student-teacher ratio prescribed by the RTE Act. Its classrooms are in a state of disrepair with broken benches strewn around.

“The government’s infrastructure as of now is inadequate to absorb the children from unrecognised schools. So in the event that more children will have to be re-admitted urgently, we will face a shortfall of adequate infrastructure,” warns Ajay Kumar, project coordinator-complaints, RTE division, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

Is then the immediate shutting down of unrecognised schools in the best interest of children? “Closing down the schools is in the interest of children provided we have adequate infrastructure in schools where they can be admitted immediately. In case we don't have the support, if children's rights are getting affected that doesn't go in the interest of child,” says Kumar.

Holding the government responsible for children being trapped in a non-formal system of education, Kumar says: “First of all, unrecognised schools shouldn't have come into existence. These schools developed because the government failed in its duty to create the necessary infrastructure – schools in every neighbourhood, standards in terms of imparting education, faculty and curriculum.”

Schools fail RTE test as deadline ends

Sowmiya Ashok
Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar



The Hindu Students at a government school in the Capital. Photo: V. Sudershan

It had been two years since the Right to Education Act was enacted, and at a public meeting in March 2012 organised by the non-government organisation JOSH or Joint Operation for Social Change in Delhi's Trilokpuri, parents voiced their concerns about the quality of education their children received. Teachers are not paying attention to children, they said, nor are facilities for drinking water made available in schools. There were no fans in the classrooms, the school's library could not be accessed and in many places basic infrastructure such as desks were not provided.

A year later on March 14 this year, JOSH released a report coinciding with the completion of three years of implementation of RTE Act. The study, conducted in seven areas covering six districts of Delhi, engaged student volunteers from different premier colleges and institutes who covered a total of 1,425 households and 29 schools. The study found that the National Capital "seems to be severely lagging behind in fulfilling its promise to provide quality education to its most marginalised citizens."

The study flagged off several concerns, among them a complete lack of awareness among children, parents and the larger community about the provisions of the RTE Act. School infrastructure is one such provision in the Act with dictates that every school should have all-weather buildings, a library, toilets, drinking water, barrier-free access and playgrounds among other things. "While the data points to problems in terms of quality teaching, other aspects such as infrastructure facilities were also found to be in poor state," noted the study.

Aheli Chowdhury of JOSH said a major reason for the added stress on schools run by Delhi's Municipal Corporations is the fact that they operate two shifts – for girls in the morning and boys in the afternoon. "The maintenance fund goes to one shift every alternate year and there is passing of blame on destruction and damage to property and the lack of upkeep between the administrations of the two shifts."

Yet, checks and balances in place keep municipal schools functioning, said noted activist Thomas Antony. "They have a monthly meeting where principals discuss their problems with the [Education] Department and school inspectors pay regular visits," he said, adding the Delhi Government schools do not function in an open environment. "The school administrations are even known to file police complaints against parents who complain about an issue. Even NGOs are discouraged from intervening and often MLAs are called in to hush up matter. That is not the case with the Corporation schools," said Mr. Thomas.

There are others such as senior advocate Ashok Agarwal, whose NGO Social Jurist has been fighting cases related to the education field, who are equally perturbed by the lackadaisical approach of the administration in providing the infrastructure for proper school education. In 2011 he had petitioned the then Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court A.K. Sikri with postcards sent by school students from Narela in which they had demanded they be provided basic things such as desks.

"Nothing came of it. There has been no improvement. There are Class VIII girls in Kirby Place jhuggis which I recently visited who cannot read. In some classes, there are up to 100 children and desks are not brought in because it will leave little space for so many children," he said, adding though the situation has improved since, a lot still remains to be desired. "We often hear announcements that children would be provided with Ritu Beri designed uniforms and the like, but when it comes to the basics, the situation is pathetic. There are no desks and no proper drinking water facility in many of the schools."

Representatives of both the Delhi Government and the Municipal Corporations claim that the problem of shortage of desks will be solved by the end of the year. "With carpentry unit of Tihar Jail almost doubling their supply of desks to the schools we are sure that by the end of the year we would have completely addressed the problem," said a senior government official.

Tihar Jail spokesperson Sunil Gupta said the jail factory has been regularly providing desks to the government schools. "We have been providing between 60,000 and 70,000 desks per annum for several years now. In fact, that number has been rising and last year it crossed 90,000. That is a major reason why our revenue rose from around Rs 12 crore in 2011 to nearly Rs 32 crore during the year." So, it is the convicts in the jail who are actually scripting a better life for the citizens of the future.