



**Contact, Orissa**  
**Gobinda Ballava Dalai**  
*State Coordinator*  
*School Choice Campaign*  
Ph: +91 94379 36315  
*socialgobinda@gmail.com*

**Contact, Delhi:**  
**Ms. Anisha Gupta**  
*Campaign Associate*  
*School Choice Campaign*  
Ph: +91 98731 08057  
*anisha@ccs.in*

---

## Orissa School Choice Campaign launched

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

**Activists demand Fund Students, Not Schools!**

### **Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, 19 June 2007:**

At the seminar on, “Quality School Education in Orissa: Problems and Remedies” held in Bhubaneswar, Centre for Civil Society (CCS), a public policy research and advocacy organisation, along with Kalinga Centre for Social Development (KCS D) launched the Orissa School Choice Campaign. 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. Poor parents have no choice but to send their children to those schools.

“As per the Education Development Index of India, 27 out of 30 districts in Orissa are ranked between 200 and 400 which mean that 98% of government schools are performing poorly. Since the poor have no place to go but these government schools, they are getting left behind. If we have to make the Right to Education meaningful, we have to give them the Right to Education of *their* Choice. School vouchers give the poor the choice that the rich enjoy today”, says Dr Parth J 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.

“Our interactions with Civil Society Organisations and individuals at the district-level reveal that people en masse are fed up with the government’s indifference towards providing quality education for poor children. The School Choice Campaign will unite people to raise their voice against this indifference.” says Ritwik Patra, Senior Campaign Associate.

The Orissa Campaign aims to reach out to parents more than 2.5 million parents across Mayurbhanj, Baleswar, Kendrapara, Khordha, Gajapati, Sundargarh, Koraput and Balangir. The School Choice Campaign is a national campaign. It is gaining ground in Delhi, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab.

Mr. Sudarshan Das, Director, KCS D said that campaign activists will mobilize the communities through street theatre, cycle rallies, meetings with parents, seminars and workshops. They plan to create delegations of citizens to demand school vouchers from their elected representatives.