



School Voucher Award Ceremony

Fund Students, Not Schools!

New Delhi, Thursday, 26 July 2007:

Tanu, Naveen, Jitender and Pragati beamed from the dais at their parents. For these four children, clutching their school voucher certificates--awarded by the Centre for Civil Society--this was a proud moment and the start of an exciting voyage.

Since March this year, Centre for Civil Society has been engaged in selecting **408 eligible students** for the Delhi Voucher Project from **68 of the poorest wards** of Delhi; namely, Narela, Welcome Colony, Jahangir Puri and Dilshad Garden amongst others. The process started with an intensive on the field campaign that reached out to more than **12 lakh parents**.

Subsequently, over **1.2 lakh parents** and students filled up initial registration forms for the voucher. 408 students were then selected through a public lottery drawn by the Ward Councillor of the area. The campaign did not end there. At the meeting with the ward councillors of their respective areas, over **2.5 lakh parents** submitted signed petition, demanding their right to an education of choice.

“The Delhi Voucher Project”, feels Gurcharan Das, “empowers parents and gives them a choice of where to educate their children. I have always believed that we must fund students and not schools, and the Centre for Civil Society is doing precisely this.”

What many would call a theoretical idea translated itself into reality with successful implementation of India’s first voucher project. Children selected under the Delhi Voucher Project are independently gaining admission into schools of their choice.

For TK Mathew, the “Right to Education, inspite of being enshrined in the Constitution and being legislated upon remains a distant dream. School Vouchers enhance the implementation of the Right to Education and at the same time give parents a choice to place their child in a conducive environment for learning.”

For many poor families in Delhi, the fact that their child will only go to a bad government school is something that they have learned to live with. But that presumption is slowly being challenged, especially by 408 families.

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.

Date: 26 July, '07

Venue: Kamani Auditorium

Chief Guest: Sheila Dixit

Guests of Honour: Gurcharan Das, TK Mathew, Nafisa Ali

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