CONVENTION WITH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Date: 14th and 15th April 2018

The RTE Forum has been closely tracking the status of implementation of the RTE Act since its inception as well as working closely with Teachers Associations/Unions across country to implement the Act in an inclusive and equitable manner. Teachers Associations have been playing an important role in making elementary education a fundamental right in India. They have been allies in the collective advocacy around growing privatization of education, merger and closure of government schools and the declining status of teachers in the society. Another critical issue that needs to be looked at is the provision of proper infrastructure as well as a safe and secure space for the children going to school, on and off campus.

The two-day Convention aimed at reiterating and restating some of the arguments that were put forth in a meeting in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha in 2012 where representatives of 24 states came together under the banner of All India Primary Teachers Federation and RTE Forum to discuss on issues related with school education.

The Convention aimed at not just delving into the issues but also to identify solutions for the prevailing problems. Given below is the summary of the discussion and decisions taken over the course of the two days Convention.

Summary of the Discussion

- **Ram Pal Singh**, President, AIPTF, addressed the participants and highlighted the Personal Code of Ethics for teachers. He stressed the criticality of the relationship between teachers and students, among teachers, between teachers and society and the impact that these relationships have on students’ safety.

**The objectives of the Convention:**

- **Need** for strengthening the provision of Safe, Quality and Equitable Education for All;
- **Defining** the role of teachers in creating an Enabling Learning Environment for Safe, Quality and Equitable Education for All;
- **Need** for restructuring Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) to render it teacher-friendly and discuss changes likely to be incorporated in the upcoming New Policy on Education;
- **Need** for allocating 6% of GDP for education and adequate funding for implementation of the Act;
- **Formulating** a joint action plan to address the issues impeding achievement of the goal - Quality Education for All.
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• **Ambarish Rai, Convener, Regional Forum for Safe and Secure Education**, started with highlighting some of the recent incidents related to girls’ safety. He expressed his concern about the lack of focus on this issue as part of training of teachers and the inattention by state governments in general. He also highlighted the current government’s promotion of privatization and commercialization of education.

• **Kamla Kant Tripathi, General Secretary, AIPTF** spoke of the correlation between children’s dropout and teachers’ behavior, the occurrence of violent crimes and bullying in school premises, need for clear allocation of roles of different stakeholders pertaining to these issues, and the absence of inclusion of pre-primary education in the RTE provisions.

• **Anjela Taneja, Technical Director, CARE India** started with Bhubaneshwar declaration emerged from the meeting with teachers’ union in 2012 and highlighted the need for follow up on the agreements reached therein. She elucidated the increased incidences of sexual harassment and bullying in schools and the lack of structural safety within the educational system as contributing to the drop out of children, especially girls, from marginalized communities. She highlighted the need for sensitization of the stakeholders in education system, positive media engagement, regional-level engagement with a focus on girls and other marginalized sections and stressed on role of teachers as change agents.

• **Professor Poonam Batra, Delhi University** talked about the diminishing respect of the teaching profession and the lack of teachers’ autonomy in syllabus-formation and teaching. She also highlighted the issue of social access as prescribed by the RTE Act and the need for children from marginalized communities to have equal opportunities and safe space to learn. She stressed the need for a plan to address these problems.

• **Dr. Ajit Singh** spoke about the importance of teachers’ professionalism.

• **Ajay Choubey, educationist** shared his experience based on working with selected school in Delhi about a journey towards a community school from an official school and what is an active classroom culture.

• **Priyank Kanoongo, Member, NCPCR**, explained the need for categorizing schools and making appropriate safety guidelines. He also shared the initiatives taken by the
commission to ensure safety of students like conducting school safety audits across country and developing a comprehensive guideline on school safety.

- **Ramakant Rai, NCE** threw light on the caste-based discrimination operating in schools and stressed upon sensitization of all concerned stakeholders including police and court on ensuring children’s safety.

- **Seema Rajput, Technical Specialist, CARE India** shared data on the status of girls’ education in India. She also talked about the need for comprehensive understanding and planning by teacher unions on safe and secure education.

- **Indrashekhar Mishra, All India Secondary Teachers’ Association**, stressed the need to redress the neglect of quality public school education.

The last session dealt with the most important issue of developing synergy between teacher union, SMCs, CSOs, and other stakeholders.

**Agreements and Response**

An action plan for a gender-sensitive, girl friendly education ecosystem that works to ensure safe and secure education was an output from the deliberations on the second day. Some of the initiatives to be undertaken by the teachers’ union, government, individual, school/students and community and the nation were enlisted. The national-level plan included vision of safety; safety of teachers, especially women; use of social media for awareness; status report by teachers, among many other steps. All eight states shared their actions keeping in view the current reality in their respective states. A detailed action plan is attached as annexure 2.

In conclusion, the National Convention, **Ram Pal Singh President, AIPTF**, proposed a vote of thanks, with a call to duty and inspiration for ushering in transformational change in the realm of ideas. The participants from distant states were particularly praised for the efforts they took in coming all the way for participating in the convention. He thanked all who worked to design and execute the program and make it a success.