The Right to Education Forum (RTE Forum) organised its two-day National Council Meet on 22-23 July, 2017 at Vishwa Yuva Kendra in New Delhi. The Meet was held with an aim to evaluate overall education, particularly school education, scenario in the country and formulate appropriate strategy to mount pressure on the policy makers for a judicious, equitable and inclusive education policy for all. This National Council Meeting was clubbed with a rich discussion during National Consultation on Financing of School Education in India and New Education Policy held on previous day 21st July, 2017 at IIC Annexe which had already set the tone and background for the second and third day of the National Council Meeting.

**DAY 2: 22**\(^{\text{nd}}\) **July**

**Introduction**

The Meet commenced with a welcome note by Mr. Ambarish Rai, National Convener, RTE Forum. Welcoming the delegates from different states, Mr. Rai expressed his concerns over the gloomy situation in the country in general and education sector in particular. He said that political atmosphere in the country has taken a sharp turn in last couple of years. This tectonic shift has created many hurdles and thus cast a deep impact on education.

The proponents of “new” politics, Mr. Rai said, are trying to take education in a different direction. For this, they are manufacturing several logics and arguments. On the funding issue they claim that there is no dearth of funds and enough money is available for education. The core issue is how to utilize them for improving quality of education?

Mr. Rai further informed that the RTE Forum had invited those proponents, government officials and policy makers for a constructive debate and discussion during the National Consultation on Adequacy of Financial Resources for School Education in India and New Education Policy, held at India International Centre Annexe in New Delhi on July 21, 2017. But none of them turned up. An official of NITI Aayog, too, expressed her inability to attend the Consultation on the pretext of an official meeting scheduled at Bangalore. However, the official has asked the Forum to send the suggestions that emerged out of the Consultation.
Mr. Rai expressed his disappointment that raising public issues, particularly advocacy for an equitable and inclusive education for all, has increasingly become difficult due to the changes that have taken place in last couple of years. The meanings of community and citizen have been undermined and distorted. Organisations like Centre of Civil Society, Central Square Foundation etc. have been strategically brought to fore in the name of civil society, community and citizens. And now these organisations are taking part with the government in policy formulation on education. In fact, the representatives of these organisations are making their presentations before the different state governments and designing education policies and roadmaps for them. It’s really sad to see that those who have been fighting for strengthening of public education system and state accountability are now almost on the verge of extinction. And these private players, who have no knowledge, experience and expertise of ground realities, are gradually occupying the space and suggesting market oriented education policies. They are talking about trivial issues like employability and so on. In our discourse, education is essential for the existence, development and unification of the society along with learning outcome. But for them, education is nothing but a “product”. It’s a tool to groom professionals meant for the market.

Taking his arguments further, Mr. Rai said that in present circumstances there is no readymade design or solution available for us. In next two days, we all have to think together about our future course of action because approx. 58.5 per cent of the total wealth of the country, according to noted journalist P Sainath, is now concentrated in the hands of only one per cent people. Earlier this figure was 53 per cent. And this increment has taken place in last three years which, in fact, coincide with the reign of the present government at the Centre! Besides 10 per cent population, sitting at the last ladder of social stratification, has got absolutely nothing in their kitty. In other words, the collective income of 30 per cent population from the bottom of Indian strata is not even one per cent of the total wealth. Inequality of such magnitude is found in the country. Moreover, next 60 per cent population from the bottom has already faced extinction or is on the verge of extinction.

Mr. Rai said that interests of this 60 per cent population, in such a grim situation, will be jeopardized if the reins of education gradually slip into the hands of market forces or private players snatch the control in the garb of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP). He further said that we strive for such government schools which would cater 100 per cent population so that a discourse of socialisation and culture of
assimilation could be initiated in the country. We don’t require a divided society which nurtures hierarchy and segregation. Actually, we need an integrated and humane society based on equitable, quality and inclusive education with government schools as its centre.

Instead, Mr. Rai said, attempts are being made these days to create a cruel society based on hatred. There are efforts to convert the entire society into mere a crowd which pays no heed to any logic and argument and just beats or thrashes anybody on slight pretext be it caste, creed and religion. So, education has a very important role to play. We are bound to get such obnoxious society if our education fails to address these questions.

Concluding his address, Mr. Rai reminded that Mahatma Gandhi used to say that always think about a person sitting at the last ladder while making any policy. Today this philosophy has been completely ignored by the policy makers. We have to chalk out an appropriate strategy to compel policy makers for equitable quality education for all without any discrimination. And this has to be done with a focus on the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Because, this is the only available tool in our hand for raising accountability related concerns.

After this, Mr. Ambarish Rai invited Ms. Annie Namala, co-convenor, Delhi RTE Forum and Mr. A K Singh, Convenor, Jharkhand State RTE forum to facilitate the following session.

Session 1: Overview of NEP : Recap of previous day discussion: Dr Rakesh Kumar
Presentation on Key indicators of education in India : Dr Ganesh Nigam
Facilitators : Mr A.K Singh, Mr Victor Raj, Ms Annie Namala

The session started with the introduction of delegates from different states. Thereafter, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Singh, NEG-FIRE was requested to present the Recap of the National Consultation on Adequacy of Financial Resources for School Education in India and New Education Policy, which was held at India International Centre Annexe in New Delhi on July 21, 2017.

Presenting the recap, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Singh, informed the gathering that the Consultation had three important segments. In the first session, “Are there enough public resources for school education in the country? Examining the available evidences” was discussed. This was followed by a very significant
brainstorming session on “Requirements of resources for universalisation of school education: perspectives and strategy”. The third and final session had a comprehensive discussion on “Perspectives and advocacy strategy for New Education Policy”.

Dr. Rakesh adding mentioned that the session on “Are there enough public resources for school education in the country? Examining the available evidences” was based on a study carried out by the CBGA and CRY, in the backdrop of latest financial committee’s report, on the performance of 10 states after devolution of funds. Mr. Asadullah, Ms. Protiva Kundu (CBGA) and Ms. Komal Ganotra (CRY) were key the figures behind this study.

Dr. Rakesh also told the gathering that Prof. Krishna Kumar, Former Director, NCERT, in his opening remarks at the session, expressed the need to take stock of the situation that has succeeded the enactment of Right to Education (RTE). He said that several developments, which took place in last 15 years, have forced us to concede that the RTE is now no longer a challenge for those sitting at the helms of the affair and the basic essence of this legislation has been forgotten by them. During this period, like several other ambitious programmes on education, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan too went to oblivion after attaining its childhood, adolescence and youth. So, it’s imperative to asses those years carefully and with full clarity.

Dr. Rakesh also talked about Mr. Asadullah’s deliberations regarding the background of the presentation on “Are there enough public resources for school education in the country? Examining the available evidences”. Mr. Asadullah, CBGA said that in last 2-3 years the question of adequacy of funding on education has somehow been pushed out of debate. Whole debate now has been revolving around quality of education. Most of the discussions have been focused on either quality is being achieved or not being achieved. In fact, there are few debates which discuss how quality should be examined if it’s not achieved? There’s hardly any effort to inquire whether appropriate parameters of quality are available? Nobody’s interested in knowing whether these parameters show any positive quality growth? And how quality growth should be acquired?

Mr. Asadullah reminded that after comprehensive deliberations of more than two years in the fields of primary education, secondary education, university education and technical education the Kothari Commission had recommended 6 per cent of GDP for education. But this recommendation is still a
distant dream. The combined expenditure of the Centre and various state governments since last 10 years is hovering around 3.5%-3.6%.

Dr. Rakesh also informed the gathering about the presentation made by Ms. Protiva Kundu of CBGA on “Are there enough public resources for school education in the country? Examining the available evidences”. He explained them how Ms. Kundu, with the help of various evidences in government documents, established the fact that public expenditure on education is highly inadequate in India. During her deliberation, Ms. Kundu gave examples of various states including Bihar where education is under-funded. She also informed the gathering how supplementary source, like education cess, has become primary source for funding in education.

The delegates were also informed by Dr. Rakesh that after the presentation, several questions were raised by the participants. Ms. Protiva Kundu and Ms. Komal Ganotra answered those queries and explained their point of view on availability of public resources for school education in the country. They also explained the logics adopted for the presentation.

Informing the gathering about the session on “Requirements of resources for universalisation of school education: perspectives and strategy”, Dr. Rakesh said that Prof. Muchkund Dubey, President, Council of Social Development, confined his deliberations on two parameters. First, are resources for elementary education adequate enough? Second, how this adequacy can be measured? Prof Dubey said that there could be many justifications for current scene of resources in elementary education. But it would be better if more and more voices are raised for additional expenditure in elementary education. He said that it is important to understand what we want to achieve with additional resources in this sector. Undoubtedly, our goal is universalisation of school education. There should be no scope of discrimination in this regard. Parameters for measuring adequacy of resources should be norms and standards prescribed by the RTE Act rather than a comparison with performance of other government (special category like KV, NV etc) and private schools.

Dr. Rakesh also talked about the viewpoints of Prof. Praveen Jha of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) who said that any discourse on education is incomplete without the question of adequate resources. It’s very important for us to discuss the huge gaps between what is being provided and what is actually
required for education. The question of adequacy is, in fact, very complex. One can think of a variety benchmarks in this regard.

Dr. Rakesh also mentioned how Prof R. Govinda, former Vice Chancellor, NUEPA, exposed government’s apathy for education. Prof Govinda talked about how every year the ministry would demand some amount and how that demand would be cut down. He underlined the story of budget estimates, revised budget estimates and actual expenditure. He also explained how people sitting at Shashtri Bhawan in Delhi, as part of Project Approval Board (PAB) and Technical Advisory Group (TAG), decide the fate of a far flung district like Nellore etc. and how the amount, which is granted finally, does not match the ground realities.

After that, Prof. Vinay Kantha gave a brief recap about the session on “Perspectives and advocacy strategy for New Education Policy”, which was chaired by Prof. Poonam Batra of University of Delhi and attended by eminent intellectuals like Prof. Krishna Kumar, former Director, NCERT, Prof. Anita Rampal, University of Delhi, Mr. Rampal Singh, President AIPTF and Prof. Kantha himself.

Prof. Kantha told the gathering that he raised the issue of closure of government schools in various parts of country and expressed his dismay over the need of a New Education Policy at this juncture in his speech. He told that the direction of the New Education Policy is being guided from somewhere else. Ideological assault is being made these days. A particular kind of ideology is being imposed. In such situation, it’s a challenge for all of us to take the movement of education forward.

Talking about Prof. Anita Rampal’s speech, Prof. Kantha informed the gathering that the learned professor expressed her anger over the things that are being done beyond the ambit of the policy framework and the way a different set of framework beyond the realm of the RTE Act is being imposed in Delhi. She said that today undue focus is being made on learning outcome and quality of education.

Prof. Kantha also briefed about the speech of Mr. Rampal Singh, President AIPTF, who observed that no concrete policy can be formulated without taking care of issues pertaining to teachers and infrastructure available at schools. He also said that all necessary measures should be taken to encourage thinking ability in children and steps like merger or closure of government schools should be discouraged at any cost.
Prof. Kantha concluded the Overview with the observation of Prof. Krishna Kumar, former Director, NCERT who said that much upheaval has been witnessed in the field of education in last 15 years. There has been institutional damage on large scale during this period. From the experiences of 1986 Act, we have learnt that national goals don’t work unless they are not understood at state level. It was mentioned in the 1986 Act that Centre Advisory Board for Education (CABE) would not be enough and constitution of State Advisory Board for Education (SABE) would be necessary for larger goals. But the question of constitution of State Advisory Board for Education (SABE) has been ignored by all states. This is an unfinished task. The New Education Policy should complete it. In a country like India, which is so diverse geographically and culturally, a micro policy discourse at national level can’t be possible. There should be a chapter in the new policy about state level policy making and planning, state level statistical collection and state level reviews etc. Prof. Krishna Kumar advised the RTE Forum to take lead and draft this chapter.

After Prof. Kantha’s Overview, Dr. Ganesh Nigam, made a detailed presentation on Key Indicators of Education in India. He started his presentation with facts related to trends in enrolment in elementary classes (Grade 1-8). He explained that how enrolment in primary classes has reduced from 134.13 million in 2007-08 to 129.12 million in 2015-16 and how it has increased from 50.91 million in 2007-08 to 67.59 million in 2015-16 in upper primary classes. According to him, the total Enrolment (Grade 1-8) was 19, 67, 16,511 in 2015-16.

Dr. Nigam also explained how the share of enrolment in Govt. schools has reduced from 72.23 % in 2007-08 to 59.44% in 2015-16. The enrolment in Govt. schools, according to Dr. Nigam, was 133.65 million in 2007-08 and reduced to 116.92 million in 2015-16, while it has increased in Private schools from 51.39 million in 2007-08 to 79.80 million in 2015-16.

Talking about the share of enrolment in Government schools at elementary level in different states and Union Territories during 2015-16, Dr. Nigam informed that the share of Government schools in enrolment at elementary level was less than 50% in 12 states, while it was more than 80% in four states.

Dr. Nigam also spoke about the transition rate from primary to upper primary level and elementary to secondary level during 2015-16. He informed that the transition rate was about 90% and it was low for
Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Muslim, especially at elementary to secondary level.

Talking about infrastructure facilities at Govt. schools during 2015-16, Dr. Nigam said that the overall infrastructural availability rate was 76.33%. More than 40% schools required basic elements of the infrastructure like one classroom for every teacher, HM room, boundary wall and playground.

So far as the infrastructure availability rate in Govt. schools in different states and Union Territories during 2015-16 is concerned, Dr. Nigam said that it was more than 85% in Delhi, Puducherry, Maharashtra and Kerala. He also informed that the national average of the infrastructure availability rate in Govt. schools during that period was 76.33 %. It was lowest in Meghalaya with 62.91% and was highest in Chandigarh with 97.89%.

Talking about the percentage of not professionally qualified teachers in Govt. schools in different states and Union Territories during 2015-16, Dr. Nigam informed that out of total 46,74,275 teachers, 7,41,122 (15.86%) teachers were not professionally trained and around 80% of them were in five states (Assam, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal). Meanwhile, the national average was 15.86 %. There was no professionally unqualified teacher in Govt. schools in Delhi and Puducherry. The highest number of professionally unqualified teachers in Govt. schools was in Meghalaya with 72.44%.

Dr. Nigam also informed that out of total 10,76,994 schools during 2015-16, around 96,245 (8.94%) schools were single teacher schools. Of these 96,245 single teacher schools, more than two-third were in six states (Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh).

So far as the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in Govt. schools in different states and Union Territories during 2015-16 is concerned, Dr. Nigam said that it was more than 30 in three states –Uttar Pradesh Jharkhand and Bihar. He also informed that the national average of the PTR in Govt. schools during that period was 26. With a figure of 56 the PTR was highest in Bihar.

Pointing out the teacher vacancy status as on 31stMarch, 2016, Dr. Nigam informed that total 9,07,585 teacher posts (17.51%) were laying vacant in the country. Six states which contributed 70% share of vacant posts were Bihar (2,03,650), Uttar Pradesh (1,74,666), West Bengal (85,835), Jharkhand (73,793), Madhya Pradesh (63,851) and Chhattisgarh (43,100).
He further revealed that during 2015-16 more than half schools of Bihar, Jharkhand, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh required teachers to fulfill RTE norms.

Dr. Nigam also shared detailed information about the Completion Rate. He observed that Completion rate is a core indicator of an education system’s performance because it measures efficiency of the school system and is also considered as a proxy indicator for the quality. According to him, the completion rate indicates how many persons in a given age group have completed respective level of education. It indicates how many children enter school on time and progress through the education system without excessive delays.

Dr. Nigam informed that the Completion rate at Primary level increased from 70.50% in year 2001 to 82.83% in year 2011. Improvement was more than 20% points for Rural, SC and ST during 2001-2011. The Completion rate at Primary level was still very low (73.52%) for ST and almost at par for males and females in year 2011. He also talked about the Gender Parity Index for Completion Rate at elementary level for the period 2001-11.

According to Dr. Nigam, significant progress was made during 2001-11 and 12 states/UTs achieved target of gender parity. But 15 states/UTs had gender parity in favor of boys, while it was in favor of girls in 9 states/UTs.

After Dr. Nigam’s presentation, delegates from different states made their submissions one by one about the activities, actions and future plans in their respective territories. But before that, making an intervention, Mr. Ambarish Rai, National Convener, RTE Forum suggested that it’s imperative for us now to think over the expansion of our base and movement. And it can be done only when we integrate with other movements and causes. We must keep this fact in our mind that any issue can become a national agenda only if it is debated intensely among the masses. For this, we need to bring dynamic and energetic faces in our organization and leadership. It’s the need of the hour that strong suggestions in this regard are mooted by our different state organisations.

**Session II: State Presentations**

**Facilitators:** Dr Bharat Singh, Ms Annie Namala, Mr Gautam Bandhopadhyay
The representatives/Convenors from the States present in the National Council Meeting included 15 states: 1. Mr. Prabir Basu, West Bengal, 2. Mr. Anil Pradhan, Odissa, 3. Mr. A. K. Singh, Jharkhand, 4. Prof. Vinay Kanth, Mr. Ravindra Nath Rai, Mr. Dharmendra Kumar, Ms. Chitralekha, Mr. Sanjeev Kumar, and Mr. Pushpendra from Bihar, 5. Ms. Annie Namala, Dr. Bharat Singh, Ms. Chandrakanta, Mr. Rajeev Kumar from Delhi, 6. Mr. Sooraj, Haryana, 7. Mr. Malay, Rajasthan, 8. Mr. Ajay Sharma, Mr. Ajay Patel, UP, 9. Mr. Mujahid Nafees, Gujarat, 10. Dr. Madhukar Gumble, Ms. Hemangi Joshi, Maharashtra, 11. Mr. Victor Raj, Pondicherry, 12. Mr. K. Murthy, Tamilnadu, 13. Mr. Srinivas Rao, Andhra Pradesh, 14. Mr. Murali, Mr. Venkat Reddy, Telangana, 15. Dr. Gautam Bandopadhyay, Chattisgarh

Making his submissions, Mr. Venkat Reddy, MV Foundation representing Telangana along with Mr. Murali and Mr. Srinivas Rao, Convenor, Andhra Pradesh RTE Forum informed that a lot of social organisations in the state are now taking interest in education issues and are ready to lend their support whenever the need arises. He suggested that we should explore the possibility of making legal intervention. For this, we should identify some potential lawyers both at national as well as state levels and work with them. He also suggested that we should identify those parliamentarians who can take up our cause of education in parliament. Mr. Srinivas Rao raised an alarm regarding increasing phenomena of privatisation of the schools in Andhra Pradesh and the danger of school closure. He proposed to organize some Consultation by state chapters of RTE Forum with the support of National RTE Forum on Privatisation and handing over of the schools to the private institutions like Bridge International Academy by AP government. On asking if the copy of MoU done by the state govt. with BIA is available, he said it’s not available till now but we will try for that.

Mr. K. Murthy, Tamilnadu shared that TNRTE Forum is trying to take initiatives on the issues and organizing programs on the implementation of RTE as well as on the issue of child labour which is directly related with the education of out of school children and a violation of RTE Act. He referred to the State level consultation on "Present situation of Education and Proper Implementation of RTE Act-2009" held in June at Trichirappalli, Tamilnadu and also the work done by the TN-RTE Forum with the National Forum of Beedi Workers. A consultation on Beedi Workers and Children Education was also held in the month of June which along with other problems discussed the challenges to provide education to the children whose parents are engaged in the industry. The issue of their safety and security was also discussed as they are facing dangerous situations regarding their health issues. Mr.
Murthy, also shared the problem of unavailability of resources for the TN State RTE Forum which is facing crisis since beginning and said that till now he has not been able to mobilise enough resources for the organisation to work smoothly.

Mr. Prabir Basu of West Bengal, in his submissions, said that we lack proper planning. For effective planning, he suggested an organisational re-structuring of RTE Forum in different states. He also stressed for an honest evaluation of challenges both at national and state levels. He said that our future plans largely depend on the nature of challenges we face on daily basis.

Mr. Anil Pradhan, Convenor, Odissa RTE Forum informed that District Forums are in place in 10 districts of the state. Engagement is being made with teachers and media personnel on regular basis. He also informed about the interaction with the Education Standing Committee of the state. He mentioned about the post-budget consultation and intervention regarding teachers’ transfer policy.

Mr. A K Singh of Jharkhand talked about the endeavor of State Education Support Mission. He informed about the School Development Plan, which was prepared with the state government. He also mentioned about the SDG Report, which was submitted to the state government. He spoke about the creation of a group on What’s App with the ministers, public representatives and government officials of the state for continuous interaction.

Mr. Mujahid Nafees of Gujarat informed the gathering that the activities in the state are being done in informal ways. He said that the organization (Shala Mitra Sangh) has its presence in 16 districts of the state and it works with Aanganwadi workers in tandem. It keeps a close watch on the functioning and facilities of around 1000 schools. He also talked about the State Convention which was conducted at Ahmadabad. He also informed that every month one meeting is conducted in every district on regular course. Talking about the issues, he said that several errors in the school textbooks were spotted. In fact, many fallacies about Christianity and Muslims were being spread among children through school textbooks. The organization, along with other groups, strongly opposed this regressive move and forced the government to tender an apology. He also said that compelled by the organisation’s sustained activities the state government ordered to introduce Gujarati translation of NCERT books. He spoke about how the organization is raising the issue of poor infrastructure in schools, shortage of teachers.
and strengthening of the regional language so that the students of marginalized communities can be benefitted.

Ms. Hemangi Joshi and Mr. Madhukar Gumble from Maharashtra jointly explained about the activities in Maharashtra. They informed about the sustained efforts of highlighting government school closure issue in media. They also talked about their activities like creation of Google group and Facebook page on social media for the cause of education. Talking about the issues, they said that closure of government schools is major cause of concern in the state these days. Earlier, it was done quietly. But now the state government is openly advocating closure of government schools on the lame excuse of performance. Privatisation of education and private schools are being shamelessly encouraged by the government. Not only this, the government has announced to establish 100 schools of international level. Financing for education has been drastically reduced in the state. The government has made gradation of schools. They also informed how state government’s recent decision of granting aid on the basis of gradation was vehemently opposed.

Mr. Gautam Bandhopadhyay of Chhattisgarh said that sincere efforts are being taken to make significant intervention in and outside schools of the state. Talking about organizational structure, he informed about the association of 57 organisations and 13 core committee members. He said that the RTE Forum registers its presence in all major movements of state be it in northern Chhattisgarh or southern Chhattisgarh. Besides, field activities are being done in 720 schools of 520 panchayats of 22 districts. He also spoke about the activities carried out in the name of RTE Watch. He informed that around 4000 RTE Mitra have been enrolled in 22 districts to give momentum to education related movement in the state. These RTE Mitras are youths of 18-20 years age-group. He also mentioned about Stock Taking Convention and the meetings with SCPCR in every three months. He talked about the education related grievances collected from across the state by the organization. He also shed lights on the intention of big agitation. He said that impetus is being given to collaborate with other organisations for significant political intervention on education issues. He also expressed his concerns over the increasing instances of closure of government schools in the state. He informed the gathering about the decision of handing over of government schools to D.A.V organization.

Dr. Niranjanaradhya, Convenor, Karnataka RTE Forum shared a couple of plans in writing as he was unable to attend and Dr Aparajita Sharma shared in the Council. He informed about a plan to revamp
the state forum of RTE- People’s Alliance for Fundamental Right to Education (PAFRE) in the next couple of months. He expressed the intention of bringing the teachers association into forefront leadership along with other networks, like KSPSTA, CACL, SDMCCF, BGVS, DSS, Framers Group etc. to build the larger alliance. He also talked about the first state level convention of School Development and Monitoring Committee Coordination Forum; which of its first Kind in the country, after bringing SDMC members together from Panchayat to district level through a systematic process to strengthen the SMCs at the school level for the effective implementation of the RTE act and to demand Common School System on neighbourhood principle. He mentioned about the historic state convention of SDMCCF in which delegates from 225 education blocks covering 34 educational districts participated. He explained his plans to convene the meeting of southern state chapters of RTE Forum along with teachers’ union of the respective states.

Ms. Aatreyee Sen, Himachal Pradesh RTE Forum shared the developments over the last one year while the forum was constituted. The forum had organised SMC State Convention which has initiated the environment of discussions in community and also engagement with Local Bodies, community and government officials on the implementation status of the RTE Act. She shared the challenges in the state regarding implementation of the RTE. Mr. Gopal, also from Himachal RTE Forum shared that it’s very essential to work with youth and community for generating awareness on the issue of education.

Mr. Suraj from Haryana shared about RTE Chapter work with community in Mewat. The organisation faced tough challenges in the beginning due to backwardness of the region but continuous work yielded very fruitful results. During all this work the government officials were also engaged along with the community in a positive manner. Now, it’s important to take this experiment further in other areas too. But, he shared that we lack proper structure of the Forum as well as resources for a sustainable work and outcome.

Mr. Malay Kumar from Rajasthan was not present during the state presentation but he shared previously that the biggest challenge in the state was school closure at large level. After more than 17000 schools were closed in recent years, RTE Forum started campaign against this with several consultations and seminars with the help of Rajasthan RTE Forum and got success in reviving more than 3000 schools. But now, the government is planning further to close more schools. Mr. Malay also told
that it’s important to take steps to keep the state forum active so that initiatives can be taken promptly at state level.

**Mr. Sanjeev Kumar and Mr. Dharmendra from Bihar** shared the initiatives taken by Voluntary Forum of Education (VFE) in the last six months. On the completion of 10 years of its journey, VFE had organized 3 days 10th Bihar Education Conference in January this year. It debated very deeply on the different aspects and intention of the proposed New Education Policy and the implementation status of RTE Act. The session on sharing of the members of SMC Federation was an important step making SMC members active and enriching them with the experiences at state level. A march was organized for Right to education on the 1st day while the other two days had a rich discussion on the alternative document of Education Policy prepared by VFE Team. Later, VFE submitted its views to MHRD. Mr. Digvijay from IDEA, working in Motihari, East Champaran on strengthening SMCs and Mr. Dharmendra from Dalit Vikas Abhiyan Samiti shared the developments regarding making SMC Federations in new blocks. Ms. Chitralekha shared about the formations of “Sankuls” (small groups) at community level which tries to meet regularly to identify the challenges faced in the smooth running of the schools or and planning to overcome them. She said that this is a good experiment which gives enough exposure to community women and SMC members. Mr. Ravindra Nath Rai suggested that VFE has always trying to connect with students unions, teachers unions and representative of other social movements and networks so that education can be made a broader agenda. It’s important for broadbasing of the RTE movement and we should go with the experiments at both State and National Level.

**Mr. Ajay Sharma and Mr. Ajay Patel, representatives from Uttar Pradesh** shared the initiatives taken by SCORE on the issue of education in UP. Mr. Ajay Sharma told that he was basically engaged with the issues of landrights and employment through the campaign named Roji Roti Hak Abhiyaan since long, but after association with SCORE he is now trying to locate the problems through the lens of education also. It’s undoubtedly a very important issue and has deep linkages with other social issues. He told that the state forum, after the last National Consultation on RTE held in Lucknow before the NC Meeting, had a massive drive to meet several political organisations and candidates of Parties handing over the charter of demand on RTE. It was, he said, a right move towards making education a prime agenda but it needs consistency and regular work among the communities to generate more awareness. He told that present political scenario in the State is not very conducive. Enough budget for education is still not a
priority, the issue of para-teachers recruitment has also affected the regular teaching in schools. He said that we must go by the provisions set by RTE Act to recruit regular and trained teachers but it’s not a right move to sack all the para/contract teachers without giving an alternative. It has deprived lacks of teachers from their livelihood and a government should not take decisions abruptly. Mr. Ajay Patel shared about the Campaign going on in the state to enroll the children under 12 1 (C). He said that after overcoming the primary challenges, especially from the private lobby, now we are getting success. We are also trying to engage SMC Members to resolve problems of the schools which is giving positive results at some places.

The representatives from Delhi RTE forum shared about the Text Book Campaign which was focused to provide quality textbooks to the children on time. Several Community dialogues were organized all over Delhi during last six months engaging local bodies and SMC members along with students and activists. A one day SMC Convention was also organized on this issue and the SMC members tried to meet the Education Minister of Delhi. All these efforts proved very fruitful and we were able to create pressure on the government to provide books on time. It was shared that although the government is claiming to allocate enhanced budget for education, but we must keep a vigil on where the most of the budget is being spent. We have to check whether the schools are providing quality education and infrastructure of the schools is now better or not. We also have to check the status of the basic facilities and other indicators which are to be provided as per the RTE norms. A Shiksha-Samvad was also successfully organized at the Press Club of India engaging different stakeholders along with journalists on Education Budget after the new Budget was tabled. Regarding organizational challenges, it was also shared that the Forum should be more active to take prompt initiatives.

Mr. Victor Raj from Pondicherry presented on the importance of working on out of school children as they are vulnerable and falls prey to child labour. After the amendment to the CLPRA Act which is CALPRA after the amendment, children are pushed to child labour. In Pondicherry RTE forum has been working on this aspect. Unregulated Private schools are also increasing in Pondicherry. A state convention was organized highlighting these issues.

Dr Aparajita Sharma presented on the work done at the National level. She began by giving a brief recap of the activities planned during the last National Council meeting. Based on the action points she said that the national RTE Forum worked on building alliance with other networks mostly with farmer’s
network, Dalit networks, women’s networks and on a regional level with the launch of a Regional Forum on safe and secure education. The Network could bring representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar along with Indian delegates.

Session III Preparation of Action Plan based on the issues/concerns raised

Facilitators: Prof. Vinay Kanth, Mr Prabir Bose, Mr Anil Pradhan, Ms Hemangi Joshi

Ms. Hemangi Joshi said that first of all we must decide what we actually need. Whether we need a unified action plan at National level or we should opt for separate state level action plans. We must have clarity in our approach. Without a careful strategy and planning we can’t combat the nefarious designs of people sitting at the helms.

Participating in the session, Ms. Annie Namala said that before any planning we should minutely analyse the current national scenario. Earlier, it was thought that change can be brought through advocacy and interaction with the government. But experiences of last three years have taught us that this government is not interested in any discussion or interaction on education. It’s now quite clear that without pressure this government wouldn’t relent. Recent developments have underlined that the government is uncomfortable with people’s mobilization. Separate planning should be done for state and national levels. State Forums should take the responsibility of planning and agenda setting at local level. One or two issues should be taken up at national level. After identifying an issue, a detailed strategy should be planned keeping its tagline, social media campaign and visibility in mind. We should also think about the related symbolic actions which could be carried out at least once in a month. In other words, our agenda should be clear otherwise no organization will come along with us.

Mr. Madhukar Gumble, Co-Convenor, Maharashtra RTE Forum suggested that our demands should be clear and crisp. There should be ambiguity in this regard. Since large number of children is deprived of education and schools, we should keep this fact in mind while formulating our demands. We should explore the possibility of taking those public representatives along who are genuinely interested in education cause. Similarly, we should also approach those lawyers, intellectuals, bureaucrats and media personnel who are ready to lend support to our cause. He further said that it would be appropriate to take a common programme for entire nation. An appropriate mechanism should also be developed for mobilizing adequate funds to make our action plans successful.
Dr. Bharat Singh, in his suggestions, said that we should set a national agenda with a particular slogan and nationwide acceptability from public, not government. We shouldn’t demand any concession or help from the government. Instead, we should frame a movement. We must keep in mind that the government is not our master. The character of the proposed movement should be national. We should adopt a long-term planning.

Mr. Dharmendra of Bihar suggested that our focus should be on extension. Extension means inclusion of new partners. For this, we should conduct separate workshops for students, teachers and Dalit organisations etc. We must identify at least one person in a panchayat and enroll him as RTE Mitra. A proper planning should be done for media so that our issues get maximum exposure. A workshop should be organized for training of effective use of social media. And finally, a public movement should be launched with a slogan “Save the Constitution and its Preambles”.

Mr. Gautam Bandhopadhyay of Chhattisgarh said that there is no alternative of mass mobilization. We should design such a movement that can assimilate farmers’ issues alongwith ours.

Ms. Hemangi Joshi suggested that closure of government schools is a burning issue. We should organize an awareness march on this issue. We should also demand the right of education upto 18 years of age.

Mr. Anil Singh, from Sansad said that in our youth days Allahabad was the epicenter of education. Today, Kota has become the nerve center of education. We find private schools in every nook and corner of the country. Nobody is now ready to send their children to government schools. There are numerous talks of unqualified teachers. Who has closed Government Teachers’ Training Schools? The concept of ITI was introduced in 1960s. But ITIs are defunct today, why? A bogus notion has been imposed in our mind over the years that private schools are good; they symbolize with quality teaching and attractive career and jobs. We must expose private schools, engineering & medical colleges which are run with incapable faculties. We should prepare our action plans by keeping current situation in mind. Attempts have been made in recent past to destabilize those institutions (e.g. JNU, FTII Pune etc.) which raise logical questions. So, we should include students in the exercise of making of action plans and design an agenda with which other organizations and movements can also integrate.

After the presentations a team from Alliance for ECCD presented on one of the primary messages brought forth during the Stocktaking convention. The Team (Shubhika Sachdeva, Chirashree Ghosh and
Komal Gonotra) and presented on the importance and need to link pre-school and integrate seamlessly under RTE. Spelling the importance of the role of pre-school education the following were emphasized:

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) should be the right of every child and be linked and integrated in a seamless manner under RTE Act

- ECCE - integrated provision for children from three to six years, which addresses a child’s need for care, education, safety and protection, nutrition and health, in a holistic manner

- State institutions and different models under enabling regulatory mechanism

They also shared how important the **Rate of Return to Human Capital Investment at different Ages are and particularly 0-5 years.** If one of the needs during this age are not integrated it impact the holistic development of the child during this critical stage and thereafter

Concluding the session, Prof. Vinay Kantha said that we should make a National Action Plan. But we must remember that an ambitious programme can’t be prepared in a hurry. It needs time and careful planning. During planning, we have to think what should be the role of the National Secretariat? What role states should play? Whom we should make contact with? If we include any organization in our schemes of thing, then we must give room to their aspirations also. And if we decide to go for a movement, our style of functioning must be changed then. We can’t work in routine manners in that situation. We must invoke critical thinking and planning before integrating with other social movements.

**Day 3: 23rd July**

Action Plan 2017
A half day in-depth session on action plan was held on the third day of the National Council meeting. It was unanimously decided to prioritize the issues at the hand first. The issues included education for all without any discrimination, compliance of RTE, inclusion of pre-school and secondary education under the ambit of legal entitlement, adequate financing, delayed release of central budget, privatisation of education, recovery of institutions like NCPCR & SCPCR and demand of an autonomous independent monitoring commission.

Regarding activities, it was agreed that there should be continuous dialogue with other groups for making the movement more diverse and broad. An idea was also mooted to have a state level convention/round table meeting for participation of Dalits, women, student, farmers, Tribal for building the connect from pre/primary-school to higher education level. It was also conceded that serious initiatives should be taken to make language and behaviour inclusive. A continuous communication was desired at national and state level on different issues. There was a discussion on TA and Sankul (11-15 schools to be clubbed together) for communicating with teachers for awareness and sensitization. It was also agreed to mobilize teachers for strengthening govt. schools and to take up the issues of teachers (e.g. hierarchy & discrimination etc.). It was decided to organize Legal Workshops to identify lawyers interested in working for the cause of education. An idea of regional level training (under the guidance of Prof Krishna Kumar, Prof Muchkund Dubey and R Govinda) was discussed for Cadre Building. It was decided to prepare a list of 500 cadres by February next year. Responsibility was given to Kerela RTE Forum (Alex George, Venkat) for a campaign regarding regulation of private schools.

Several strategies were also discussed. It was decided to have training sessions for Social Media Campaign. For this, responsibility was entrusted to Ms. Sneha, Ms. Somya and Ms. Chadrakanta. It was also decided to make effective interventions keeping Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh assembly elections in mind. Idea of education manifestoes and education related small videos on twitter and facebook were discussed. People’s mobilization (for creating pressure) was also discussed. Plans of Symbolic meetings, Bharat Yatra and legal intervention (PIL) were shared.

**Issues prioritized**

1. **Sabko Shiksha Saman Shiksha (Education for all)**
   a) Bhed Bhaw Rahit Muft shiksha (Free education without any form of discrimination)
   b) Rte Compliance
c) Inclusion of preschool and secondary education under the ambit of legal entitlement
2. Adequate Financing
   a. Delayed Release of central budget
3. Privatisation
4. New Education Policy focusing on Institutional Recovery (NCPCR, SCPCR)
   Demand for an (Autonomous Independent Monitoring Commission) as suggested by Prof
   Krishna Kumar

Activities
- To dialogue with other groups for making a diverse movement
- Strengthening SMC and SMC Federation as a strong RTE cadre at the grassroots
- State level convention/round table for participation of Dalit, women, student, farmers, Tribal
  for building the connect from pre/primary-school and higher education
- Make Language and Behaviour inclusive
- State level with diverse groups/alliances on education for sharing on implementation
  /compliance of RTE
- Both National and State level continuously connect on different issues
- TA and Sankul (11-15schools are clubbed, CRC) for communicating with teachers for awareness
  and sensitization
- Prepare list of clusters (resource centres)
- Mobilize teachers for strengthening govt. schools
- Round table convention with TA./Teachers
- Issues of teachers also should be taken up eg. Hierarchy, discrimination, Tola Sevaks
- List of possible alliances with social groups
- Aadhaar: Children’s consent for Aadhaar
- Draft a letter to teachers and principals regarding Aadhaar
- Legal Workshop (Identify lawyers)
- Cadre Building (Prof Kumar, Dubey, Govinda will guide) regional level training.
- A list of 500 cadres to be generated till Feb 2018.
- Advocacy against Privatization of schools. Responsibility: Kerela RTE Forum (Alex George,
  Venkat)
- Public education protection Campaign
- Document and advocate good practices at the government level

Timeline:

- **Launch of a Campaign**: 25th September, 2017
  - Shiksha Diwas, RTE Demand day
- **Observe Education Day**: 11th November
- **Next National Council**: December
Stocktaking: Feb- March
Identify lawyers: December
Cadre building training: February
State level with diverse groups/alliances on education for sharing on implementation/compliance of RTE: October

Strategy:
- Social Media Campaign (Sneha, Somya, Chadrakanta, training for developing social media with National Secretariat)
- Gujarat and HP Election
- State level convention, (education manifestoes, Materials)
- Small video on twitter and facebook
- Bring different social groups/campaign to break the NGO framework
- People’s Mobilisation (this has worked in creating pressure)
- Legal groups, social groups, key decision makers
- Reaching out to the community at large including children
- Use of social Media
- Symbolic meetings on the Agenda, slogan (acceptance to common people), Bharat Yatra, RTE Mitra
- Others social alliances, movements (farmer’s movement) will join on the basis of the Agenda of the National RTE Forum and larger people’s mobilisation.
- State specific alliance as state may have different alliances.
- Mobilization at state as well as National Level
- Legal intervention, PIL
- Using post cards as a form for advocacy
- Catchy phrase, packaging of messaging for sensitizing and reaching a larger audience
- Prepare RTE cadre
- Convergence of ideas from different regions and prepare action plan
- Funds mobilization

Scribe: Mr Rajnish Prasad