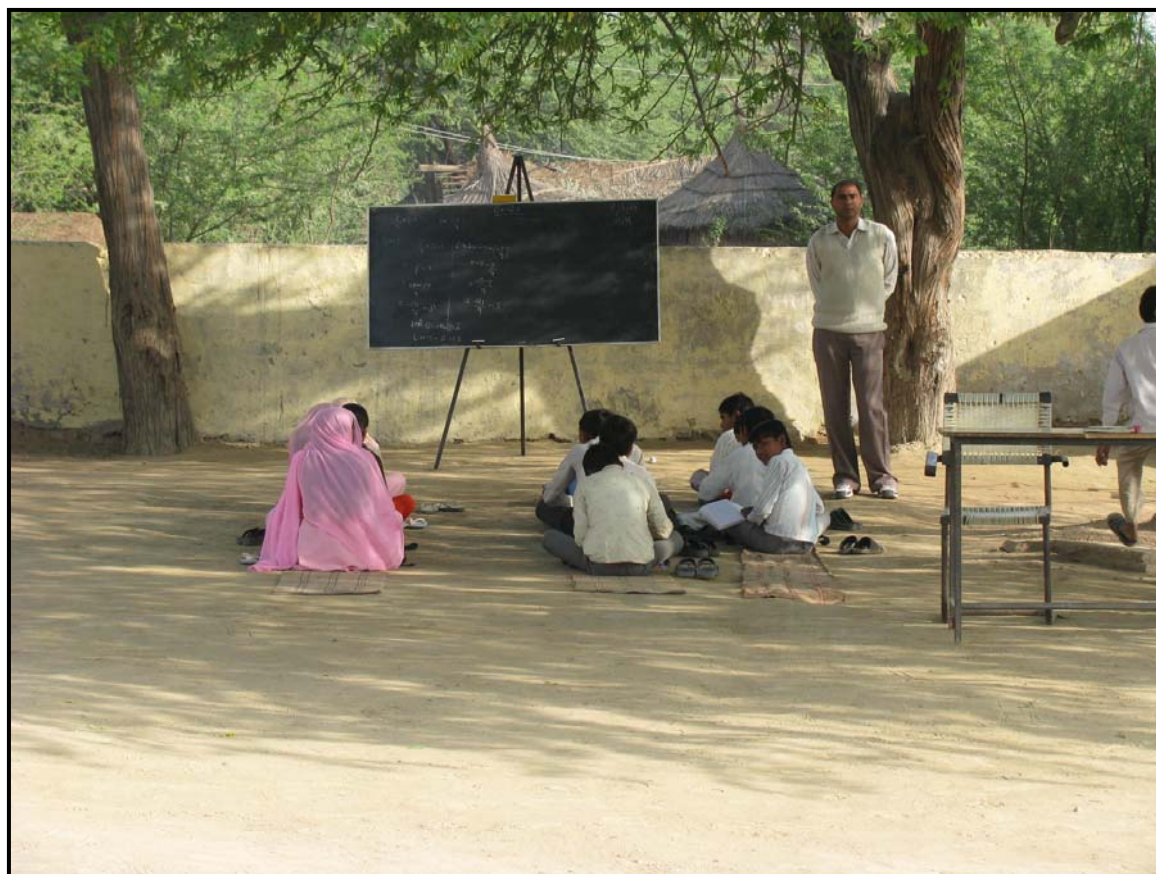


NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS



Report on the Public Hearing at Rupraka village, Hathin block, Palwal district of Haryana

2nd March 2009

**National Commission for Protection of Child Rights,
5th Floor, Chanderlok Building,
36, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001**

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Introduction

A Public Hearing was organized in Rupraka village in Hathin Block of Palwal district in Haryana by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in collaboration with White Lotus Trust and Village Education Committee, Rupraka on 2nd March 2009. The NCPCR was represented by its Chairperson Dr. Shantha Sinha, Ms. Sandhya Bajaj, Member NCPCR, Mr. B.K. Sahu Registrar NCPCR and Mr. Ramanath Nayak and Ms. Swati Narayan, Consultants NCPCR.

The State government was represented by Mr. C.R. Rana, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Palwal District, Mr. Chauhan, the Assistant Deputy Commissioner and the Sub Divisional Magistrate. The Department of Education of the Government of Haryana was represented by Deputy Director Primary Education, District Elementary Education officer and Block Education Officer.

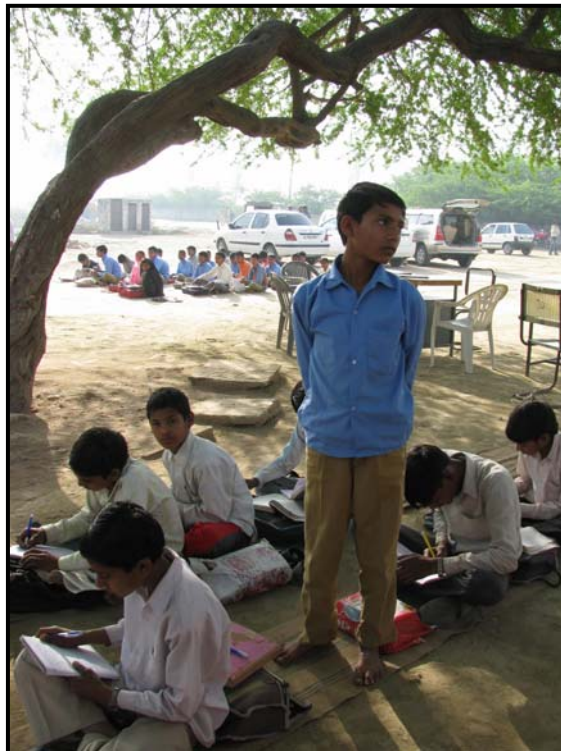
Background

Mewat district is one of the most educationally backward regions in the country. For Muslim women in Mewat, the literacy rate is as low as 1.76 - 2.13 per cent. Just three in every 100 women are literate-the worst ratio in the country. The literacy rate for Muslim men also falls below the national average and ranges between 27 to 33 per cent. The majority of the population in Mewat consists of the Meo community who are a million strong and had adopted Islam en masse during the Tughlak dynasty of the 14th century.

Visit to Schools

The NCPCR team visited four schools: two primary and middle schools at village Malokhra and Dhiranki respectively, a model school in Mewat before reaching the Public Hearing venue at the school in Rupraka village.

Government Primary and Middle School Malokhra



Education in Mother Tongue

At first we observed the 13 children (6 girls, 7 boys) of 6th standard studying Mathematics. Arif indicated that he was the only one of 7 in his family who is being educated. His older brother works.

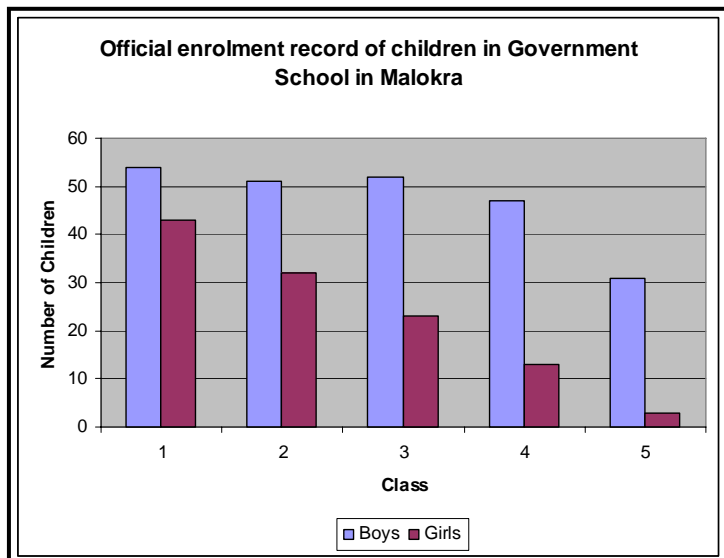
It also came to the Commission's noticed that though Urdu was the mother tongue of the majority of those in the Meo community, despite constitutional provisions, Sanskrit and Hindi were being taught to students at the primary level and only after 6th standard could they opt for Urdu. Neither posts for Urdu teachers across Mewat have been sanctioned nor filled.

Age Appropriate Classes

Remedial coaching classes also seemed to be required to upgrade the level of education available to children and shift them to age appropriate classes. Older children were found to be sitting in primary schools.

The school had 7 classrooms but it was estimated that 300 more students are out-of-school at the least. 5 rooms have been under construction since last year and have only reached roof level. This year they are expected to get some more money in installments. Provision of water is difficult both in the school and village. There is also no provision for a separate school for girls.

On speaking to the community of villagers who had gathered near the school they agreed that the education of girls was suffering due to lack of facilities. They were keen to send their schools especially if separate girls education facilities were made available nearer the villages.



They also indicated that there was a strongly felt need for Urdu teachers right from the pre-school level. They also felt that Urdu teachers presently teaching in *maktabs* would be willing to teach at government schools, if posts were sanctioned. Instead at the primary level, Sanskrit was being imposed by the government. Only from 6th to 8th standard did schools have the option of introducing Sanskrit.

Complaints were made that admission fees or annual fees for child welfare of Rs 50 was being

charged which made education unaffordable to most parents.

Government Primary and Middle School, Dhiranki



The school in-charge was reportedly on leave when we came to the school. For the first time in middle school there were no regular teachers but only 2 teachers (1 guest, 1 contract) of which 1 had left. Here too the proportion of girls was almost half that of boys.

The school also had toilets which were locked and in disrepair and the boundary wall were broken. Despite 3 years of construction the primary building remained incomplete and 3 rooms for the middle school were also incomplete. Some classrooms have been under construction for many years in middle school and primary school at village Dhiranki. The suspended head master had been reinstated but the construction remained incomplete. Rs 90,000 had also been spent for the construction of the kitchen shed whose roof had fallen.

The children had also not received their midday meals for 3 months as the money had not been released. The problems were raised with the DC and he assured action to solve the problems.

The NCPCR team also spoke to the villagers gathered at schools of both the villages and listened to their problems and suggestions to improve the schools. The villagers complained that many children were out of school and since the teaching staff was insufficient, many children were disinterested in studies. Their main demands were

- The school needs more teachers
- The previously suspended head master needs to be removed
- Boundary walls and the school building need to be completed with fresh grants

We were also informed by the villagers that the anganwadi exists but children have never been provided supplementary nutrition. Also for three months the anganwadi worker and helper have been out. The villagers also complained that neither do they have NREGA job cards nor had they been provided with any work.

Mewat Model School

The school which has 750 children enrolled had excellent infrastructure. It had classes upto 10 standard and 29 teachers. Fees of Rs 150 – 300 per month were charged and children taught in the English medium. Hostel facilities have yet to open but they are under construction. There was also a need for 4 more rooms.

Though the school was not in session on the gap day, we visited the facilities including the staff room and were impressed with the spacious environs and the computer lab. 1/3rd of the children studying in the school belonged to the Meo tribe and 2/3rd communities.¹

They also conduct remedial classes for their own children and those studying in the KGBV. Across Mewat demand for model schools and KGBVs outstrips supply and there is an acute need to increase their capacities.

Government Primary and Middle School, Rupraka

¹ This fact seemed a little odd as more than 2/3rd of the population in Mewat belong to the Meo community – the largest concentration of Muslims in North India. It plausibly is testimony and reflection of the extreme disadvantage of the Meos in education



The team also visited the Ruprekha school which was the venue of the Public Hearing. WE visited the 1st standard classroom which was packed with 96 children managed by a single guest teacher who receives Rs 300 per day as wages. Inadequacy of teachers and classrooms seemed acute.

Girl children were also candid about the number of labourious activities that they needed to engage in at home from cooking to filling water apart from attending school. During the harvesting season in March-April too for 15 days children are seen to regularly assist their parents in the fields. Also traditional attitudes, result in most children dropping out at 13 years on attaining puberty.

It was also evident that girls were seated in classrooms which are lower than their age-specific learning abilities. There seemed to be an acute need to incorporate accelerated learning programs.

The schools have no boundary wall. Drinking water and toilets for children had been provided the week before the visit. There was however a need for more functional toilets.

Public Hearing



The Public Hearing at Rupraka started at 10 a.m. in the Middle school of the village. People from more than 30 villages including about 20 Sarpanchs participated and raised the problems being faced in their village schools.

The petitions raised by villagers were as follows:

Ruprekha village

Sarpanch of Rupraka village welcomed the Chairperson and Member of NCPCR and

thanked them for coming to their village which is a privilege for Mewat district considered to be the most backward district of India. The Sarpanch hoped that the visit of the Commission will bring some positive changes in the schools of Mewat.

The VCC Pradhan Shri Mohammad Hussain indicated a number of problems in the schools especially the middle schools which in 2002-2006 and again in 2009 all the students failed in the examinations, as the guest teacher scheme introduced in the interim had been abolished and the government teachers neglect their duties and do not provide quality education.

- 1) **Appoint new teachers:** The Panchayat had passed a resolution and he had also personally submitted several applications and petitions at the block level on the issue of absenteeism and neglect of duties by the government teachers, but had received no response nor had any action been taken. They requested that based on their resolution the teachers who were responsible for bringing a good examination result should be brought back
- 2) **Textbooks required:** Often textbooks were received only at the end of the year which severely affects the completion of the school syllabi and the ability of children to pass the examinations
- 3) **Abolish fees:** children are required to pay Rs. 50/- as school fee, which is not affordable to many poor families
- 4) **Upgrade schools:** Despite the Chief Minister promise to upgrade the village school to High School, action is not take.
- 5) **Kanya Patshala required:** In his village more than 300 girls are in need of a middle school and it would be preferable if the girls primary school be upgraded to middle school available exclusively for girls.
- 6) **Improve Monitoring:** A number of issues to ensure the quality of education can be resolved if there is appropriate monitoring by the officials on a regular basis which is absolutely lacking



The officials present informed that appointment of graduate teachers had been banned three years ago. Also across Mewat 137 schools had been upgraded to middle school, but they had not been provided any teachers or school building.

Another villager from Rupraka pointed a number of other infrastructural problems:

- 1) For 1.5 to 2 years, despite receiving money from SSA, school buildings are incomplete.
- 2) Rs 4 lakhs had been sanctioned for the construction of boundary walls, but they remained incomplete even though the villagers had submitted a number of complaints to the Block Development Officer (BDO)
- 3) There is no mat, carpets or desks for children to sit on
- 4) No student has received the prize which is given to top 10 students in school
- 5) The midday meal is made available very infrequently – often it is stopped for 2 month and again resumes once they receive the payment
- 6) No drinking water facility was previously available but has been arranged only last week. The toilet was also in disrepair but has been improved two days before the visit
- 7) 150 houses in Chili *basti* also need a school

- 8) SSA construction of school building and classrooms should be given to a *thekedar* or private agency as the teachers can't manage it and use it as an excuse not to teach.
- 9) The midday meal should also be given to a non-government agency as it also becomes an excuse to not teach as they are busy most of the time buying ingredients
- 10) In a neighbouring basti there are no primary schools where 150 children reside



The Girls Primary school in Rupraka does not have a boundary wall and is located near a pond which becomes dangerous for the children as there is no boundary wall.

Another representative of village Rupraka informed that the ICDS program is not working properly in the village as the anganwadi worker (AWW) is not coming to the centre regularly and no meals are given to the children. The CDPO present in the Hearing then explained about the reasons for non functioning of Anganwadi centers

was largely as the women of the SHG entrusted with the task are illiterate and the bank work is entrusted to the AWW but in recently it was decided to shift the tasks to a committee of literate women along with a joint account with the village Pradhan.

Tonka village



Sarpanch of village Tonka also raised several important issues of education quality:

- 1) He informed that all the children in class 8 in the school of his village have failed in 1st semester exams because there is no teacher for these students in the school. The school has been upgraded since 2006, but no teachers are appointed. The Sarpanch said that they had submitted petitions to the Block Education Officer about this problem several times but no action is taken. Not even a guest teacher is

provided.

- 2) The boundary walls of the schools were also non-existent
- 3) In 2005 a new classroom had been constructed but the roof has a water leakage problem and 3 classrooms lie incomplete
- 4) The Head Master who has been in the school for the last 12- 13 years doesn't teach. It is only the guest teachers who are committed

The Haryana Government Education Department officials present in the Hearing replied that 32 schools in the block have no teacher in Middle school as the Government has banned the recruitment of Guest Teachers and the recruitment of regular teachers takes long time due to lengthy process of recruitment. Across Mewat no teachers had been appointed for the middle schools which have been upgraded with 1000 posts lying vacant.

Maluka village

Sarpanch of village Maluka informed that his problems were similar to those faced in Rupraka village

- 1) He blamed the block level officials for doing nothing. Teacher supervisions is simply non-existent. Despite lodging several complaints no action has been taken
- 2) In the examinations the results were not good even though the school in his village had only primary classes till 5th standard
- 3) After primary class the children have to travel 8 km to attend 6th class.
- 4) There was the need for a girls school

Kumredha village

Representative from village Kumrehda requested that

- 1) Though the school had four teachers, one of them simply doesn't teach despite the villagers making repeated complaints to the BEO, the teacher is arrogant that no one can remove him from his post. The teacher is involved in local politics and often seen seating with the village influentials in the school and tauts the villagers to complain against him.
- 2) He complained that no government officials check the work of the school teachers even if they are absent or don't teach or the condition of the schools
- 3) There is a need for a middle school in our village as the nearest middle or high school is 10 kms away. Girls drop out after passing class five because they are not allowed to go to other village for studies by their parents. There is sufficient land for extra classrooms but the school is not upgraded. Water too is not a problem for the school.

At this juncture, the deputy commissioner clarified that if there is a complaint against a teacher or any other school related matter which has been brought up as a joint resolution of the Panchayat and the VEC then that is sufficient to take action at the district level

A woman member of the VEC from Kumrehda came to the Commission with a complain of teacher. She had a few notebook of the children with wrongly written alphabets, marked as correct by the teacher. But looking at the notebook it was evident to the Commission that it was simply a case of the teacher and some students suffering from dyslexia which explained the inverted letters. Officials hardly visit to the school as there is no connecting road to the school.

Jalalpur village

Mr. Amin the Sarpanch of Jalalpur village reported that there are 7 teachers (4 regular and 3 guests) for 450 children. Teachers either come late or remain absent. VEC has passed a resolution on the absense of teachers. Some teachers are in the same school for more than 10 years.

He spoke about corruption in the school saying that the school staff is stealing the grains meant for preparing Mid Day Meals. The Sarpanch also spoke about the improper behaviour of the Block Education Officer while on inspection in the school to investigate the complaint of stealing of grains made by the villagers. The Sarpanch felt that the behaviours of the teachers are such because of the backing by the government officials like the BEO. "I

have once heard the BEO saying to the teacher if Sarpanch can have a vehicle why not you?"

The Sarpanch was so anguished that he said that if action was not taken, his children would only learn to become thieves if they are not educated and exposed to wrong role models.

Chili village

Representative from village Chili informed that the status of education in Mewat is so bad that no student has passed class 10 in his village till date. The school in his village established in 1984 is in bad shape, there is no boundary wall or drinking water. The children are sent home after distribution of Mid Day Meals as there is no water in schools. Most of the children do not come back after the MDM break which is generally of two hours from 11 am to 1 pm. This is a big hurdle in the quality of education in schools. Teachers don't teach but just sit in classrooms and he wondered what his children will learn.

Malpuri village

Maulvi Salaluddin village Malpuri informed that

- 1) there is no boundary walls in their village school and the children run away from school without any control of the teachers. This is damaging the quality of education.
- 2) The school is also closed due to flooding during rains as there is no proper land filling done.
- 3) There is no drinking water facility



Guraksar village

The VCC Pradhan from village Guraksar informed that

- 1) the school in the village has no boundary wall and children run away
- 2) Because of the location of the school at low level, the rain water gets clogged in the ground in front of the classrooms. Water upto 3 feet gets collected in the rainy season and there is the danger of children falling in it
- 3) The roofs of 2 classrooms are in such a bad shape that they may fall anytime and cause an accident

It was brought to the notice of the Commission that the VEC meeting is not held regularly, but few VEC members often visit the school and the teachers cooperate to them.

Utawar village

Hafiz Khan representative from Utawar village, the largest in Mewat informed that

- 1) This village has 3 schools, including a Kanya Pathshala and a +2 school. The village has donated the land but no additional class rooms are constructed.
- 2) The primary school has insufficient teachers for large number of students. Currently 485 children are taught by only 2 teachers.
- 3) The village Utawar has a large number of children out of school and the reason is that there is no infrastructure or the quality education available in the schools. Children are sitting outside as the rooms are not able to accommodate them.
- 4) The people do not send their children to schools as there is no education being given. There are no educational materials available and children sit outside the classroom. The children go home after distribution of MDM and many of them do not come back for the day.
- 5) There is no toilet, bathroom or drinking water facility.
- 6) There are hundred of children enrolled in school and its impossible for one teacher to take care of so many children.

These problems are contributing to the children being out of school in large numbers. A land dispute in the village had also been resolved and he requested the construction of school buildings, recruitment of teachers, and construction of boundary walls. He felt that the BEO was misguiding the hearing that two new teachers have been recruited.

The Deputy Commissioner assured that he would personally take care of the educational needs in this village once Hatin block was transferred to his area of responsibility in April.

Meethaka village

Mr. Shamshuddin from village **Meethaka** informed the Commission that

- 1) the school in his village has a very low boundary wall which is not proper and the animals enter the school and disturb the classes.
- 2) children go home to drink water
- 3) there is a need to upgrade the school to middle school and
- 4) Classes are not held regularly as there are no teachers who needed to be recruited

Bhodpur village



Mr. Shammudin from village Bhodpur presented his petition with seven points for implementation to improve the standard of education in schools. Mr. Shammudin is also a teacher in Bhodpur school.

- 1) He informed that the teacher is not a teacher today but has become a multi purpose worker. He is expected to be a contractor, builder, a cook, a post man delivering the mail to BEO office and DEO office on daily basis. He has to run to purchase building material, arrange for drinking water etc. leaving no time for teaching and is not a respected profession anymore
- 2) MDM has increased enrolment but this reduces teaching time and effort and the task should be entrusted to self-help groups (SHGs) or some other agency

- 3) SSA installments require presentation of quotations etc which are tedious and the task should be given to some other authority
- 4) Lucky draw lottery tickets were being issued for Bal Kalyan Diwas, two months after the draw and the money was forcibly taken from teachers.
- 5) Textbooks are not available in the 1st week of the school year which affects teaching
- 6) Government officials should enroll their children in government schools as that will ensure improvement in quality
- 7) Teacher vacancies in schools should be filled as most have no science faculty

Malai village

Representative from village Malai informed that the primary school in his village has no access and the children are using the house of a village to enter the school. The petitioner appealed for providing access to the school. The Deputy Commissioner informed that the access can be provided by either acquiring the land in front of the school for which the Panchayat has to make payment to the land owners or the Panchayat should give alternative land to the land owners in lieu of land in front of the school. The matter will be discussed with the villagers to follow up measures and the deputy commissioner assured that he would take action on a joint petition submitted.

Gohpur village

The representative from village Gohpur informed that There are no regular teachers for the GPS, Gohpur. The Head Teacher transferred in 2006 has not handed over the charge including handing over the belonging of the school. There is unprecedented delay in the construction of the classrooms even though 1.5 lakh has been sanctioned to complete the construction work. One class room was sanctioned under SSA in 2004 and till date the roof is not made. Two more rooms were sanctioned in 2006 and again it is roofless. During 2007-08 financial year fund allocated for 2 more rooms, but not even foundation was laid.

The DEEO asked the Block Education officer to ask the Head Master in question to hand over the charge immediately and report to work or take action against him.

Bhodpur village

Mr. Idu from village Bhodpur informed that the school in his village has no boundary wall, no toilet and no drinking water. One classroom is under construction for last two years. The children go home for water after taking MDM and most of them do not come back to school for the day.

Andhrola village

The Sarpanch from village Andhrola informed that there are about 400 children in the school of his village but the school is not upgraded resulting in high drop out of girls after class 5. The school should be upgraded as early as possible.

The officials assured the Commission to include the demands of upgradation and others in the proposal for the next financial year.

Kumreha village

Ms. Mumtaz from village Kumrehra came with the note books of her children checked by the teachers without noticing the mistakes. She informed that the schools should be monitored regularly. But on inspection of the notebooks it was evident that the teacher or some students are probably dyslexic.

Concluding Remarks

Mr. Jaan Mohammad from village Rupraka expressed happiness on behalf of the villagers that the NCPCR has visited the village to listen to the grievances of the villagers and this opportunity should be given to the villagers regularly so that the people could be educated about the right of children to free and compulsory education. Mr. Mohammad also thanked White Lotus for motivating the villagers to demand quality education in schools. He also pointed out that lottery tickets were being forcibly sold after the draw date and the matter needs to be resolved.



Mr. C.R. Rana Deputy Commissioner speaking on behalf of the Government expressed happiness about the awareness building in the Mewat district about education which was never seen earlier. Mr. Rana said that this is a positive development and will help in development of Mewat as Education is the first step towards development. The DC also assured the villagers that Government will extend cooperation in development of Mewat and improvement in schools. He encouraged that Panchayat funds be prioritized for the improvement of education and schools. He

also said that the NREGA program does not have a paucity of funds and villagers need to come forward and demand work.

He also urged the Commission to talk at Government level with regard to the appointment of teachers. He assured that he would look into the matters which can be dealt at his level. Expressing his limitation in recruiting new teachers, he assured proper orientation and supervision of the existing teachers.

The DC congratulated the public for their interest and awareness on the value of education. He gave confidence to the public that text books will be supplied at the beginning of the session and attention will be given to the proper functioning of MDM.

Appreciating the Public Hearing in Hathin and role played by NCPCR and organisers, the DC Palwal promised smaller Public Hearings to spread public awareness, motivate complete enrollment, deal with drop-out cases, remedial classes for the over age children and ensure quality education.

Ms. Sandhya Bajaj member NCPCR thanked the villagers for coming in large number to raise their problems relating to schools. She appreciated the spirit of Sarpanchs addressing the schools and children as 'my school' and 'my children'. Ms. Bajaj also urged the brave people of Mewat to work continuously for the improvement of the schools and standard of education. She congratulated the public for their fearlessness in putting the cases before the Commission.

Describing India as the nation of the young people, where 40 per cent are children, she was optimistic that globally we would be in the forefront if all our children, including girls, are given education. She assured the public that the Commission would take the issue to the Governor and Chief Minister till the demands are met.

Ms. Shantha Sinha while concluding the Public Hearing thanked the villagers, community and organisers this hearing and urged the people to fight for their rights to education of their children. She said that region is wrongly considered as backward as she has realized that the people and their vision is progressive and cultured. She said that the collective fight is to secure the rights of millions of children and to provide them with the opportunity to study and enjoy their childhood. Ms. Sinha said that this is was a very participative and inspiring public hearing among the many organized by NCPCR all over the country.



The Public Hearing was concluded at village Rupraka and the whole team of NCPCR and Haryana Govt. then again assembled at Govt. Rest House at Hathin to discuss the problems raised by the villagers during the Public Hearing. Ms. Shantha Sinha raised the following observations in the meeting with Govt. officials:

1. The Chairperson informed that there is a wrong impression that there is no demand and concern for education in Mewat but the reality is completely different. The people are so aware and concerned about the education of their children. The fact that they came in large numbers and from distant villages is testimony to their concern.
2. Large numbers of children were observed to be out of school. These children are required to be urgently enrolled in schools.
3. Girls who are out of school are a major source of concern as they are married at an early age of 13 or 14 years and become mothers by 14 or 15 years. Sending girls to schools functions as an effective deterrent for early marriage and they should be encouraged to study upto age of 18 years at the very least.
4. Many children in schools seemed to be over age for the classes in which they are studying in and steps should be taken to promote them to age appropriate classes to improve the quality of education.
5. The children can be prepared for age appropriate classes through remedial classes during after school hours or in summer and winter breaks.

6. Urdu should be taught in schools in Mewat to attract more children to schools as it has been constitutionally mandated to provide education in the child's mother tongue.
7. The government should consider the creation of residential bridge courses for out of school children.
8. It seems that the Head Masters of schools are overworked and are required to unnecessarily engage in construction work and other non teaching activities during school hours.
9. Regarding teacher absenteeism, the Chairperson appreciated the fact that the Deputy Commissioner Mr Rana had assured that if the recommendations of VEC and Panchayat were presented as a joint resolution, then those cases would be considered seriously for immediate remedial action.
10. Evaluation of quality of education in the upgraded schools should be done periodically and remedial measures should be undertaken.
11. The Chairperson also gave a suggestion to education planners that instead of upgrading schools in every village and struggling to provide teachers and other facilities, they should consider creating one very strong High School for every 10-15 villages with a student intake capacity of 3000 to 4000 along with a bus service so that children from far away villages can also come to the school.
12. School fees and other charges like the Red Cross Fund or lucky dip or lottery tickets should not be compulsory for the children. They should be optional at best.

Ms. Shantha Sinha, Ms. Sandhya Bajaj and Mr. C.R. Rana also addressed the media at the Hathin Rest House.

Recommendations

Based on these discussion, the main recommendations of the NCPCR relevant for the Hatin block and equally applicable across the other educationally backward districts of the state which were indicated in the letter submitted to the Chief Secretary (Appendix 1) were:

Elementary Education

Of the children in elementary school we noticed that several are older than the classes that they are enrolled in. Thus there were several 12+ age group children sitting in classes 2 and 3. Many of such children were girls. In the long run this could demotivate families to keep them in schools and continue their education. When children are not in an age appropriate class, in all likelihood they would drop out and especially girls would be married off.

Several testimonies by sarpanches also indicated that the quality of education of the teachers is often abysmal and consequently the pass rate of students in examinations is pathetic. The drop-out rate was also found to be undesirably high. These indicate that there are systemic issues in the quality of education imparted which need to be urgently addressed.

1. There are a large number of vacant teacher posts in most of the schools that we visited (see appendix 1 for details submitted by the government officials for Hatin block). The problem also seems to have increased manifold with the upgradation of schools to the middle school level and the abolishment of the practice of appointment of guest teachers. Till the time-consuming process of recruitment and training of permanent teachers has been completed, it is recommended to restart the scheme of **guest teachers on a temporary basis** atleast in the Mewat and Palwal districts, in both primary and secondary schools to ensure that the children do not miss out on their education. We also request detailed information on the numbers of vacant positions in each block and the steps which are being undertaken to fill these posts with permanent staff at the earliest.
2. Given that more than 90 percent of the population in Hatin block consists of religious minority community of Muslims belonging to the Meo tribe with Urdu as their mother tongue, it is imperative that as constitutionally provided for and reiterated by the Sachar Committee in 2006, their **medium of instruction at the pre-primary and primary level is Urdu**. The recruitment of atleast 2 Urdu teachers per school therefore needs to be sanctioned and all vacant posts filled at the earliest. At the upper primary level, in existing Hindi-medium schools rather than compelling students to study Sanskrit based on the three-language formula, posts for Urdu medium teachers need to be immediately sanctioned and filled.
3. It also seems that the head masters of schools are acutely overworked and are made to perform a number of ancillary tasks which affects the amount of time available for teaching. The Supreme Court ruling of 6th December 2007 categorically states that government school **teachers cannot** be asked to skip classes and **undertake non-academic activities** like election duties, census work or polio drop campaigns. We would therefore recommend that strict instructions be issued to ensure that teachers and head masters are freed of any additional non-academic work burden. The supervision and control of finances for school construction

activities should also be entrusted to decentralized village level bodies. Similarly for the implementation of the mid-day meal program in schools it would be encouraged to utilise the services of panchayats, self-help groups and village education committees to supervise and assist the cooks and helpers.

4. **Funds for the midday meal scheme** should also be released to the schools in a timely manner to ensure that there is no disruption in the provision of meals to students. Provision of drinking water which is a particular concern in Mewat and Palwal districts also need to be addressed (see appendix 2).
5. In the case of primary schools which have been upgraded to middle schools, there seems to be a severe crisis of educational infrastructure and facilities as most have not been provided with additional teachers or school buildings and this has affected the pass percentage of students in examinations (see appendix 3). The policy of **upgradation of middle schools needs to be evaluated** along with the new system of semester examinations. In the short term the necessary infrastructure and teachers needs to be provided to equip middle schools. Further, in the long run, it may also be useful to draw up a detailed education strategic plan based on appropriate population norms to consolidate the infrastructural needs of middle schools and support the creation of several high schools (of good quality similar to the Mewat Model school that we visited) with the provision of bus facilities, which may help to ease the problem of availability of teachers and improve the quality of education.
6. In several cases, we noticed that there is incomplete **construction of school buildings, boundary walls and toilets** rendering them to be often unusable (see appendix 4 for details). This needs to be addressed and if possible to utilize schemes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and others to construct access roads to schools, toilets, boundary walls and classrooms etc.
7. Across schools, **teacher vacancies and absenteeism** also seem to be a chronic problem. It has been reported in the media that a special committee would be constituted at the village panchayat level to supervise those teachers who are frequently absent from duty.² The committee has apparently been empowered to appoint a former student of the school hailing from the same or neighbouring village, having required qualification as teacher, in place of the absentee teachers. The government has also made a provision for checking the dropouts in schools and efforts are being made in this regard to set up primary schools in the radius of one kilometre and middle school in the radius of two kilometres so that educational facilities could be made available within the approach of poor students. However we found little evidence of the awareness or implementation of these initiatives on the ground and there is a need to rethink concrete solutions.

Mainstreaming Out of School Children

In tune with the statistics of educational backwardness of the Mewat region, we also noticed the unmistakably high visibility of school-aged children outside formal classrooms in large numbers. In such a scenario, an intensive, well planned campaign approach is required for

² Rajendra Khatri, 2008, Mewat to get 4000 education centres, Chandigarh,

the enrolment of every last child in school. Some of the recommended steps in this direction are:

1. As the number of girls who are out-of-school is sizable, the female literacy rate is low and the practice of withdrawing girls from school at puberty is prevalent, there is an urgent need to increase the number of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhayalaya (**KGBV**) under the aegis of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.
2. There is a distinct need to enroll children both those who are in school and out of school in **age-appropriate classes** by undertaking a systematic approach to estimating the population growth rate based on age. Children need to be provided age-appropriate intensive remedial coaching through residential bridge courses (RBCs) (which usually function for 9-10 months) and/or alternative innovative education centers to motivate them to enroll and transfer to formal schools. This intervention has been successfully undertaken by M.V. Foundation Secunderabad (A.P.) on an intensive basis in Andhra Pradesh and other states and the NCPCR would be happy to facilitate the visit of state, district and block level government officials from Haryana to study this initiative.
3. Given the number of brick kilns across Mewat and Palwal districts and the large number of **migrant labour** from other states who work there, it is imperative to make arrangements to provide alternative education, at all levels from pre-primary to secondary, for the children who accompany their parents and we recommend the implementation of a comprehensive strategy to reach every last migrant child.

Madrassas

1. To **modernize the madrassas** in Haryana (see appendix 5 for details of Islamic schools in Hatin block) and provide infrastructural facilities and staff to introduce subjects like science and mathematics, we recommend the utilization of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development for the Area Intensive and Madrassa Modernisation Programme

Remedial Classes

1. As indicated in point 8 additional tutorial support as **remedial coaching** should be provided to children enrolled in primary and secondary schools to ensure that they are adjusted in age appropriated classes.

Integrated Child Development Services

1. Several petitions indicate that the supplementary nutrition programme (**SNP**) of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is not being satisfactorily implemented. This needs to be investigated along with an evaluation of the functioning of the other pre-primary education components of the ICDS program

Monitoring and Accountability

1. We were impressed with the commitment of the sarpanches and members of the Villages Education Committee and gram panchayat in Hatin block who are extending their efforts to advocate for educational issues and school improvement at

the village level. It would be beneficial to further encourage the **training of panchayats** across Haryana to monitor the progress of each child through formal education. The Backward Region Grant Fund (BGRF) of the Panchayati Raj Ministry can be used for these purposes.

2. Several villagers and teachers indicated that there is a lack of effective monitoring and inspection of schools both in terms of the attendance and quality of teaching and provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities. Apart from investigating the efficacy of the functioning of school inspectors, there seems to be an acute need to create an effective **grievance redressal mechanism**. In this regard we put forward two recommendations:
 - The organization of public hearings or *jan sunwais* and social audits at a block and district level at regular intervals.
 - The identification of nodal block and district level government functionaries responsible to respond to child rights petitions by the community and a stipulated timeframe to address their concerns.
3. It came to our notice that several schools collect money from parents/guardians for **lucky draws even after the day of the lottery**. This is entirely unacceptable and the monies collected must be returned to restore the faith and trust in the government system to provide free education.

Annexure: Letter to Haryana Chief Secretary

D.O.No.100/Haryana/Mewat/2009/NCPCR/PD
2009

6th March

Dear

Subject: Education of Children in Hatin and other educationally backward blocks in Haryana

As you may be aware, due to the large number of complaints being received from Haryana's educationally backward districts, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) decided to hold a public hearing in Hatin block on 2nd March 2009. In this context, on behalf of my team which included Ms. Sandhya Bajaj, Ms. Swati Narayan and Mr. B. K. Sahu, I wish to thank the Haryana administration especially the Deputy Commissioner of Palwal district Mr. C.R. Rana for all the arrangements made during our visit. We would also be keen to meet with you and the concerned State level officials on issues of child rights to follow-up on the matter in coming months.

Based on our interaction with district and block levels officials, teachers, sarpanches, villagers and children at the public hearing and visits to schools (see in Hatin block (to be shifted from Mewat to Palwal district in April 2009) we were anguished to see the state of disrepair of the educational infrastructure, barely at a distance of 3 hours from the national capital.

But it gave us much hope to see the groundswell of demand for education amongst villagers and sarpanches and the positive attitude of the government officials to remedy the deficiencies. We hope that our collective monitoring of the state of education in Haryana the coming months can make a visible difference to the future of our children from the Meo tribal community.

We present the following issues relevant for the Hatin block which would be equally applicable across the other educationally backward districts of the state as several of them have policy implications and require state level intervention to enable immediate, priority action.

Elementary Education

Of the children in elementary school we noticed that several are older than the classes that they are enrolled in. Thus there were several 12+ age group children sitting in classes 2 and 3. Many of such children were girls. In the long run this could demotivate families to keep them in schools and continue their education. When children are not in an age appropriate class, in all likelihood they would drop out and especially girls would be married off.

Several testimonies by sarpanches also indicated that the quality of education of the teachers is often abysmal and consequently the pass rate of students in examinations is pathetic. The drop-out rate was also found to be

undesirably high. These indicate that there are systemic issues in the quality of education imparted which need to be urgently addressed.

1. There are a large number of vacant teacher posts in most of the schools that we visited (see appendix 1 for details submitted by the government officials for Hatin block). The problem also seems to have increased manifold with the upgradation of schools to the middle school level and the abolishment of the practice of appointment of guest teachers. Till the time-consuming process of recruitment and training of permanent teachers has been completed, it is recommended to restart the scheme of **guest teachers on a temporary basis** atleast in the Mewat and Palwal districts, in both primary and secondary schools to ensure that the children do not miss out on their education. We also request detailed information on the numbers of vacant positions in each block and the steps which are being undertaken to fill these posts with permanent staff at the earliest.
2. Given that more than 90 percent of the population in Hatin block consists of religious minority community of Muslims belonging to the Meo tribe with Urdu as their mother tongue, it is imperative that as constitutionally provided for and reiterated by the Sachar Committee in 2006, their **medium of instruction at the pre-primary and primary level is Urdu**. The recruitment of atleast 2 Urdu teachers per school therefore needs to be sanctioned and all vacant posts filled at the earliest. At the upper primary level, in existing Hindi-medium schools rather than compelling students to study Sanskrit based on the three-language formula, posts for Urdu medium teachers need to be immediately sanctioned and filled.
3. It also seems that the head masters of schools are acutely overworked and are made to perform a number of ancillary tasks which affects the amount of time available for teaching. The Supreme Court ruling of 6th December 2007 categorically states that government school **teachers cannot** be asked to skip classes and **undertake non-academic activities** like election duties, census work or polio drop campaigns. We would therefore recommend that strict instructions be issued to ensure that teachers and head masters are freed of any additional non-academic work burden. The supervision and control of finances for school construction activities should also be entrusted to decentralized village level bodies. Similarly for the implementation of the mid-day meal program in schools it would be encouraged to utilise the services of panchayats, self-help groups and village education committees to supervise and assist the cooks and helpers.
4. **Funds for the midday meal scheme** should also be released to the schools in a timely manner to ensure that there is no disruption in the provision of meals to students. Provision of drinking water which is a particular concern in Mewat and Palwal districts also need to be addressed (see appendix 2).
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evaluated along with the new system of semester examinations. In the short term the necessary infrastructure and teachers needs to be provided to equip middle schools. Further, in the long run, it may also be useful to draw up a detailed education strategic plan based on appropriate population norms to consolidate the infrastructural needs of middle schools and support the creation of several high schools (of good quality similar to the Mewat Model school that we visited) with the provision of bus facilities, which may help to ease the problem of availability of teachers and improve the quality of education.

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In tune with the statistics of educational backwardness of the Mewat region, we also noticed the unmistakably high visibility of school-aged children outside formal classrooms in large numbers. In such a scenario, an intensive, well planned campaign approach is required for the enrolment of every last child in school. Some of the recommended steps in this direction are:

7. As the number of girls who are out-of-school is sizable, the female literacy rate is low and the practice of withdrawing girls from school at puberty is prevalent, there is an urgent need to increase the number of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhayalaya (**KGBV**) under the aegis of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.
8. There is a distinct need to enroll children both those who are in school and out of school in **age-appropriate classes** by undertaking a systematic approach to estimating the population growth rate based on age. Children need to be provided age-appropriate intensive remedial coaching through residential bridge courses (RBCs) (which usually function for 9-10 months) and/or alternative innovative education centers to motive them to enroll and transfer to formal schools. This intervention has been successfully undertaken by M.V. Foundation Secunderabad (A.P.) on an intensive basis in Andhra Pradesh and other states and the NCPCR would be happy to facilitate the visit of state, district and block level government officials from Haryana to study this initiative.
9. Given the number of brick kilns across Mewat and Palwal districts and the large number of **migrant labour** from other states who work there, it is imperative to make arrangements to provide alternative education, at all levels from pre-primary to secondary, for the children who accompany their parents and we recommend the implementation of a comprehensive strategy to reach every last migrant child.

Madrassas

10. To **modernize the madrassas** in Haryana (see appendix 5 for details of Islamic schools in Hatin block) and provide infrastructural facilities and

staff to introduce subjects like science and mathematics, we recommend the utilization of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Human Resource Development for the Area Intensive and Madrassa Modernisation Programme

Remedial Classes

11. As indicated in point 8 additional tutorial support as **remedial coaching** should be provided to children enrolled in primary and secondary schools to ensure that they are adjusted in age appropriated classes.

Integrated Child Development Services

12. Several petitions indicate that the supplementary nutrition programme (**SNP**) of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is not being satisfactorily implemented. This needs to be investigated along with an evaluation of the functioning of the other pre-primary education components of the ICDS program

Monitoring and Accountability

13. We were impressed with the commitment of the sarpanches and members of the Villages Education Committee and gram panchayat in Hatin block who are extending their efforts to advocate for educational issues and school improvement at the village level. It would be beneficial to further encourage the **training of panchayats** across Haryana to monitor the progress of each child through formal education. The Backward Region Grant Fund (BGRF) of the Panchayati Raj Ministry can be used for these purposes.
14. Several villagers and teachers indicated that there is a lack of effective monitoring and inspection of schools both in terms of the attendance and quality of teaching and provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities. Apart from investigating the efficacy of the functioning of school inspectors, there seems to be an acute need to create an effective **grievance redressal mechanism**. In this regard we put forward two recommendations:
 - The organization of public hearings or *jan sunwais* and social audits at a block and district level at regular intervals.
 - The identification of nodal block and district level government functionaries responsible to respond to child rights petitions by the community and a stipulated timeframe to address their concerns.
15. It came to our notice that several schools collect money from parents/guardians for **lucky draws even after the day of the lottery** This is entirely unacceptable and the monies collected must be returned to restore the faith and trust in the government system to provide free education.

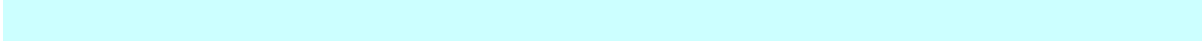
We would be grateful if you could send us a report on the steps taken regarding the aforesaid, within a period of 30 days from the date of receipt of the letter.

With

Yours sincerely,

Shri Dhram Vir,
Chief Secretary
Government of Haryana
Haryana Secretariat
Chandigarh

(Shantha Sinha)



Appendix 1: Vacant Teacher Posts

Appendix 2: Provision of Drinking water

Appendix 3: Pass Percentage in Examinations

Appendix 4: Status of School Infrastructure

Appendix 5: List of Madrassas