

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS

**Consultation meeting on Ashramshala Schools**

19.05.2014.

NCPCR, Conference Room,  
5th Floor, Chanderlok Building,  
New Delhi

MINUTES

A consultation meeting was held on 19.05.2014, at NCPCR, to discuss the (i) Possibility of a research study on Ashramshalas, including important issues/aspects that the research should focus on and the spread of the research (ii) mechanisms for Convergence amongst Ministries (MHRD, MSJE, Ministry of Tribal Affairs etc.) to ensure better devolution of resources and quality education to children in Ashramshalas. A list of participants is at Annexure.

2. **Ms. Kushal Singh, Chairperson, NCPCR** welcomed all the participants, and briefed them on the objective of the meeting. She said that Ashramshalas have been one of the neglected areas from the perspective of RTE. Some ideas in respect of which Ashramshalas need strengthening are available from existing studies. The intention of the meeting was to discuss whether a more robust study on Ashramshalas was needed and if so, what type of a study the NCPCR should take up. Chairperson added that the study / research needed to be purposeful and an aid to policy makers, for taking appropriate discussions.

3. **Ms. Preet Verma, Advisor to Chairperson** shared the broad agenda for the meeting. She also shared the major findings of the desk research of existing studies conducted by NCPCR and the issues that have emerged therefrom. She said that the NCPCR would like to elicit views on the nature, scope and methodology of the proposed research; information on existing research studies already undertaken on Ashramshalas; possible institutes; agencies that could be associated with the research.

4. **Shri. Biswaranjan Sasmal, Director, Education, Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)**, shared the following details

- NIRD had conducted a limited study on Ashramshala Schools in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The study largely focused on maintenance issues. Issues like the quality of teaching, teacher qualification, quality of learning amongst the children etc. were not covered in the study;
- He also mentioned that MOTa had been requesting the MHRD to make Ashramshala schools RTE compliant.

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**Prof. K. Sujatha, Head Department of Education Administration, NUEPA stated that**

- Ashramshalas are run under Ministry of Tribal Affairs under a Central Scheme conceived during the 1960's, to provide board and lodging facilities to children in the Tribal Areas, as there was a scarcity of schools in the interior areas.
- Presently the number of Ashramshalas has increased considerably;
- Different States have chalked out different modalities for the functioning of the Ashramshalas; for example in Gujarat and Maharashtra, it is run in the PPP mode and the monitoring is done by the State Tribal Education Department, while in other States the Department of Tribal Affairs is solely responsible for the functioning of Ashramshalas;
- There has been a study conducted by NUEPA in 9 states and 25 districts, which indicates that the Ashramshalas are relatively better than other Government Schools on infrastructure parameters.
- UNESCO has also prepared a report on Ashramshalas for Andhra Pradesh.
- The per student cost is 20 times higher than that in other schools, which further varies from State to State;
- She said that if NCPCR is to take up a research on the subject it should focus on: (1) examining the role of RTE in the context of the Ashramshala schools, (2) how safe are these residential schools, especially for girls and (3) how safe are these residential schools, in areas affected by extremists/Naxalites, (4) the aspect of inter tribal disparities, ie are these schools actually serving the most disadvantaged groups from among the tribal community, or are the more progressive tribals alone able to access them, (5) How relevant are they in the context of RTE (6) the aspect of skills training in tribal schools (6) The subjects being taught - are they restricted to humanities alone.
- The ASER report shows that the performance of ST students is quite low compared to other students, but it is likely that Ashramshalas were not covered in their sample.
- The All India School Education Survey does not cover Ashramshalas;
- It will also be important to study the sanctioned seats; seats filled; composition and drop-out pattern of students in Ashramshalas in the last 5 years, along with reasons for the same. She said children drop-out due to engagement in MNREGA related work, engagement in cultivation activities etc. The present researches are based on anecdotes from the children or the family/community, the same need to also be proved empirically. The study should also suggest interventions for preventing children from dropping-out of school;
- She cited her experience of working in Tribal Education and said that the research should also focus on the tribal culture and whether schools are reflecting their cultural experiences; the festivals the school celebrate and other co-curricular

activities conducted for the children within the school premises; the qualifications and appropriateness of teachers should also be examined.

- She highlighted the need for reviewing the State level policies guiding the functioning of these schools, as these vary from State to State and often undergo changes hampering the functioning of the schools. There is therefore, a need to institutionalize such policies;
- A study on staffing pattern in Ashramshalas, its financial liabilities etc. undertaken by NUEPA in the year 1986-87, in 6 States, showed that the management cost was very high.
- The monitoring mechanisms adopted by each State to ensure proper and adequate functioning of these schools should also be looked at.

**Ms. Deepa Das, Education Specialist, UNICEF stated that**

- Other kinds of residential schools/ hostels like those under the Social Welfare Department, Eklavya Schools etc. could also be covered under the study. This would help in recommending norms and standards for the functioning of all residential schools including Ashramshalas, as currently there are no set norms and standards for residential schools under the RTE Act, 2009.

**Ms. Annie Namala, Executive Director, Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion felt that**

- The research can also focus on learning levels of the children in these schools and identifying the deficits so as to make education more meaningful for the children; also focus on what is the best way students can learn in Ashram Schools and the additional educational support mechanism's required in the schools.
- There was also a need to look at the Tribal Sub Plan and examine how are the funds are being utilized.

**Mr. Pramod Gouri, Executive Committee Member, BGVS stated that**

- The scope of the research should have a blend of both education and a rights based perspective. This would provide a wider paradigm to the study;
- Difference in the temperamental growth of the child while living in a residential school can also be looked at.

**Ms. Sunisha Ahuja, Chief Consultant, TSG-SSA-Edcil stated that**

- There is a need to look at the target group that are enrolled in Ashramshalas, as recently there has been a KGBV evaluation and one of its findings was that over the years the composition of students enrolled in such schools have changed. All the

students enrolled in KGBV's are not drop-out girls as envisaged during the inception of such schools;

- Some States have conducted mapping of the tribal habitation, one of them being Madhya Pradesh. Similar mapping needs to be done in other States also so as to create reasonable distance norms in Tribal areas for the purpose of setting up Ashramshala Schools;
- The KGBV evaluation report and its TOR could be referred to for the Ashramshala research. It has a focus on numerous soft factors;
- RTE Act, 2009 states that the students should be taught in their mother tongue. However in Ashramshalas children come from a varied group who speak different dialects at their home. Hence it becomes a challenge for the teachers to cater to the needs of all these children. Thus the study can also focus on classroom pedagogy with regard to medium of instruction for learning;
- Presently there are no protocols for safety and security of students in such schools. There needs to be standard rules and regulations for the same.

**Ms. Tannistha Datta, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF stated that**

- Revisiting guidelines on Ashramshalas is needed, as they were created before the commencement of the RTE Act,2009.

**Mr. Shallender Sharma, AUP-Education, IPE Global stated that**

- The criteria for seeking admission in these schools needs to be analysed;
- There are very limited opportunities for girls who wish to pursue other subjects like Commerce or Science thus limiting their scope to study only Humanities;
- Norms and standards for deputation of teachers to these schools need to be developed
- Protocols needs to be set up for visitors to these schools;
- The research could focus on Schedule V States namely Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh. Some schools in Karnataka can also be taken up.
- The report produced should be State wise, with a holistic National level perspective.

**Mr. Santosh Morey, Associate General Manager-Research, CRY said that**

- Most of the children coming to Ashramshalas are first generation learners;
- There are issues of discrimination in these schools eg. sometimes in the absence of the cleaning staff the children are asked to clean the toilets etc;

- The research should focus on both the hard components like those related to norms/ standards and facilities in the school and should also touch upon the soft components like that of learning levels of children, issues of discrimination etc.

**Ms. Seema Rajput, Technical Specialist, Care India stated that**

- It has often been observed that there has been a lack of coordination between the Education Department and the Department of Tribal Affairs;
- It will be important to look at the resources available with the teachers to ensure quality learning;
- The study can also examine the interface between the community, their participation and acceptance of such schools by the tribal communities;
- It will be important to highlight the grievance redressal mechanism for children;
- There is also a need to look at the existing protocols for safety and security of children, and whether they are being followed or not.

**5. Chairperson, NCPCR stated that from the discussion there was a consensus on the following:**

- The research needed to be undertaken and should cover the 9 Schedule V States and Karnataka;
- The research can extend beyond Class VIII;
- Existing State specific reports can be referred to, for capturing information at a PAN India level;
- Review the policies of the Government relating to Ashramshala Schools and examine how far they have been implemented;
- Examine how adequate the existing norms are;
- Examine the monitoring mechanisms for overseeing the functioning of the Ashramshalas;
- Examine whether these schools cater to the needs of the most disadvantaged groups amongst the tribals;
- The research should have a blend of both an education and a rights based perspective.
- Aspects of child protection need to be covered along with health and hygiene facilities for these children- protocols for security, lacunae and recommendations therefore.
- Educational aspects- pedagogy/ subjects being taught languages need to be examined .
- Enrolment and Dropout pattern need to be studied

- SMC and Community involvement and community preferences of schools, need examination.
- Policies of State Governments- differences therein
- Grievance Redressal Mechanisms.

6. There were also suggestions on :

a) **Possible institutions/ organizations who could undertake the research:** It was suggested that TISS, Mumbai and IIM-Bangalore ( Centre for public policy and governance ) can be approached

b) **Modalities of the Research:**

- A Sub Group set up to prepare a TOR/ framework for the research.
- Research tools to be translated in the local languages;
- The Report to contain a -State level report and National level report with recommendations;
- An Advisory Committee from amongst the members present in the consultation could be constituted, who would support the concerned institution/organisation conducting the research and provide inputs as and when required. The Committee would also monitor the State wise progress of the study;
- A Protocol to be defined for meetings at the State/District levels;
- The Nodal Agency finalized for the research would develop the methodology / tools for the research and identify organizations/ institutions for data collection/ facilitating meetings etc.;
- DISE data to be used and a sample check carried out on indicators for which the data is available.

7. **Follow -up action:**

- NCPCR to formalize the Sub Group for the TOR and the Advisory Committee.
- NCPCR to obtain the available studies from NUEPA/UNESCO.
- NCPCR to convene the meeting of the sub group.

**List of participants**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Name of the organisation</b>
1	Ms. Kushal Singh	Chairperson, NCPCR	In the Chair
2	Shri. Biswaranjan Sasmal	Director, Education	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
3	Ms. Sunisha Ahuja	Chief Consultant	TSG-SSA EdCIL
4	Prof. K Sujatha	Head Department of Education Administration	NUEPA
5	Ms. Deepa Das	Education Specialist	UNICEF
6	Ms. Tannistha Datta,	Child Protection Specialist	UNICEF
7	Ms. Annie Namala	Executive Director	Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion
8	Ms. Seema Rajput	Technical Specialist	CARE India
9	Mr. Pramod Gouri	Executive Committee Member	Barat Gyan Vigyan Samiti
10	Mr. Santosh Morey	Associate General Manger, Research	Child Rights and You
11	Mr. Joy Karayampuram	Head of Department, Human Rights and Law	Indian Social Institute
12	Mr. Shalender Sharma	AUP-Education	IPE Global
13	Ms. Parul Gupta	Assistant Manager Education	IPE Global.

**NCPCR**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>
1	Shri Asheem Srivastav	Member Secretary
2	Ms. Preet Verma	Advisor to Chairperson
3	Shri. A. K. Nanda	Consultant-Programmes
4	Ms. Sonal Jain	Junior Technical Expert-RTE Division
5	Ms. Sreepriya	Junior Technical Expert-RTE Division