

MEMORANDUM

14th August 2006,
San Francisco, CA, USA.

To
Honorable B.S. Prakash,
Consul General of India,
San Francisco, CA,
USA.

Dear Honorable B.S. Prakash,

SUB: Request to submit our demands on Right To Education to the Government of India.

Education as a fundamental right cannot be denied in any democratic society. It is the duty of the Government to provide and guarantee this fundamental right. Indian Government's recent decision to drop the long pending Right to Education Bill (RTE) and pass it on to the State Governments as a diluted model bill is a completely outrageous decision ignoring not only a fundamental right but also the genuine expectations of each and every citizen.

We request the government of India **not to abdicate its constitutional responsibility** in guaranteeing Right To Education as a fundamental right. We also request the central government to **table the Right to Education bill in the parliament** for discussion.

We, hereby request you to carry forward the above request and our campaign demands, attached to this memorandum, to the Government of India on behalf of concerned Indian citizens who are members of the organizations listed below.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Members of:

Asha for Education (Asha) – Silicon Valley, Seattle, Austin, Stanford, UFlorida, DC.

Association for India's Development (AID) – Bay Area.

India Literacy Project (ILP).

Friends of South Asia (FOSA).

Contact Information:

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and RTE Campaign Coordinator**
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14th August 2006,
San Francisco, CA, USA

Right to Education Campaign Demands

To

Dr. Manmohan Singh, Honorable Prime Minister of India,

Shri Arjun Singh, Honorable Minister for Human Resource Development,

Shri P. Chidambaram, Honorable Minister of Finance .

SUB: Right to Education Campaign Demands

Education as a fundamental right cannot be denied in any democratic society. It is the duty of the Government to provide and guarantee this fundamental right. The Indian Government's recent decision to drop the long pending Right to Education Bill (RTE) and pass it on to the State Governments as a model bill is a completely outrageous decision ignoring not only a fundamental right but also the genuine expectations of each and every citizen.

We, as concerned citizens of India, view education as an inalienable right of every child in India. In this context, the proposed action of our Government to leave this obligation to the States concerns us deeply. We demand that the Central Government:

1. **Not abdicate its constitutional obligation:** Education is a *fundamental* right as per the 86th Amendment to the Indian Constitution. As per the Indian Constitution education is a concurrent subject, meaning it is a responsibility of both State and Central Governments. The Central Government has a constitutional obligation towards providing this fundamental right. The Central Government's decision to pass the RTE Bill to the States and to ask the individual State Governments to enact them at their own pace, amounts to abdication of responsibility on the part of the Central Government.
2. **Recognize the importance of elementary education:** The Central Government is ready to spend money for increasing seats in higher education courses to ensure seats in open category, whereas it pleads lack of funds when funding elementary education, even though the quality of infrastructure and education in most government schools is abysmal. This is completely unacceptable. Instead of juxtaposing primary education with higher education as if one comes at the cost of the other, the Central Government needs to make elementary education its highest priority. Lack of funds as a reason to eschew the RTE Bill is completely unacceptable and that too when the government spends less than two percent of GDP on elementary education. Legislation and funds must be directed as needed to make sure this Bill is enacted and the required infrastructure is provided.
3. **Present the Right to Education Bill in the Indian Parliament:** The Right to Education must remain a Central Bill, to fulfill the Constitutional guarantee. Four years have passed since the 86th Amendment and no action has been taken so far. Hence, the Central Government of India must present the Right to Education Bill without further delay in this monsoon session of the Parliament.

4. **Provide for Free and Equitable Education:** The Central Government must ensure that entirely *free* education of equitable quality is guaranteed and must cover all costs of education, not merely fees. Equitable quality should mean more than a mere opportunity to study in a government run school. Equitable quality should mean that provisions for minimum standard are guaranteed by law irrespective of the flow of funds, number of children and the location of the school.
5. **Make Right to Education Enforceable and Justiciable:** As per the Indian Constitution, The Central Government must be held accountable if it fails to provide this fundamental right to a child. In contrast, the Right to Education Draft Bill explicitly exempts the Government from such accountability.
6. **Provide space for public feedback and criticism:** Several groups and educationalists have provided detailed analyses and criticism on this issue. The Government must provide avenues for feedback and address concerns of the people. In contrast, the so-called Model Bill has not been made available to the public for comments.
7. **Provide for Timely Implementation of the Bill:** The Central Government must come up with a timetable for implementation of various aspects of the Bill in consultation with the implementing authorities. The timetable must include guarantees about infrastructure and general quality of education in all government schools. In addition, a high-level task force must be set up under the leadership of the Prime Minister of India to drive the implementation of the Bill. The task force must include representatives of State, local Governments, teachers, NCERT, NGO's and parents. Such a task force must be setup even at the State Government levels.

Yours faithfully,

Members of organizations involved in this campaign:

Asha for Education (Asha) – Silicon Valley, Seattle, Austin, Stanford, UFlorida, DC.

Association for India's Development (AID) – Bay Area.

India Literacy Project (ILP).

Friends of South Asia (FOSA).

Note:

1. A protest for the above demands was held on 14th August 2006 by volunteers on behalf of the organizations listed above in front of Indian Consulate, San Francisco, California, USA. A memorandum was submitted along with the above list of campaign demands to Honorable B.S. Prakash, Consul General, Indian Consulate, San Francisco. For more information:
<http://www.ashanet.org/campaigns/rte/>
2. More than 570 members of the public have endorsed our campaign and our demands, as of 13th August 2006. Please refer to online petition:
<http://www.petitiononline.com/rteindia/>

Contact Information:

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About:

Asha For Education (www.ashanet.org)

Asha for Education is a secular organization dedicated to change in India by focusing on basic education in the belief that education is a critical requisite for socio-economic change. In keeping with this focus, our volunteers are involved with and support projects that are secular and have an education-related component to them.

Today, there are over 66 Asha chapters worldwide: 45 in the US, 14 in India, and 7 in Europe, Singapore and Australia. The organization has more than 1000 active volunteers and several thousand supporters around the world. Till date, Asha has supported more than 385 different projects spanning 24 states in India. In terms of project funding, almost \$4,000,000 has been disbursed to these projects since Asha's inception. In 2002 alone, Asha chapters raised and disbursed more than \$1,000,000 to over 200 projects.

Association for India's Development (www.aidindia.org)

Association for India's Development (AID) is a volunteer movement committed in promoting sustainable, equitable and just development. In solidarity with non-violent people's struggles, AID supports grassroots organizations in India and initiates efforts in various interconnected spheres such as education, livelihoods, natural resources, health, women's empowerment and social justice.

India Literacy Project (www.ilpnet.org)

India Literacy Project, ILP, is a US-based non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to spread the cause of literacy in India. ILP acts as a catalyst for 100% literacy by forming meaningful partnerships with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in India, who are working towards the goals of total literacy and the universal right to primary education.

In the US, ILP has chapters and interest groups in 7 major metropolitan areas including the California Bay area. ILP is a completely volunteer-based organization, concentrating its efforts on building awareness for the importance of education and raising funds for literacy and empowerment projects. ILP has extended its reach to the most rural and remote parts of India. Projects funded by ILP have helped children who worked in cotton fields for less than 25 cents a day, to enroll in schools; illiterate women have attained functional literacy that enables them run their own small business.

Friends of South Asia (www.friendsofsouthasia.org)

The basic mission of the "Friends of South Asia" is to achieve a peaceful, prosperous, and hate-free South Asia. The group works towards a demilitarized, nuclear-free South Asia; bringing together people with roots in various parts of South Asia, as well as other well-wishers of the region.

FOSA aspires to work through people-to-people contacts, dialog, and other non-violent, non-exclusionary means.