NISA
National Meeting Report
September 2014
NISA held their second National Meeting of 2014 for members on 28 September 2014 at the YMCA in New Delhi. Representatives from 20 states were in attendance. The broad agenda of this meeting was to update NISA members on work done over the last six months, understand what are state specific issues concerning BPS, strategize on tackling the issues.

**SPEAKER:**

Kulbhushan Sharma (Vice President, Advocacy, NISA Secretariat)

Kulbhushan Sharma welcomed the representatives of 15 State Associations to the 2nd National Meeting of 2014. He specially welcomed representatives from Odisha, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim and Assam who have recently joined the alliance and were attending National Meeting for the first time.

Mr Sharma expressed his satisfaction with the discussions that took place in 3rd annual School Leaders Summit (SLS) held in Delhi on the previous day (27 September 2014). He added that the onus of action now lies with NISA members to develop a strategy to strengthen their advocacy efforts.

**SPEAKER:**

Parth J Shah (President, Centre for Civil Society)

Parth J Shah congratulated attendees for joining the national meeting in great numbers. He stated that, for the first time National Meeting had such a large number of representatives from different states. Commenting on the success of the previous day’s School Leader’s Summit and the follow-up points from the discussions, he said “While the immediate issue is that of school closures, we have to start thinking about how we can develop a better public image of BPS and how to shift opinion in favor of BPS. Our immediate need is that we must present our work (of BPS) in a positive way. Boondein is one great way of doing this. Every state should come up with profiles of children who have studied in BPS and succeeded in life.” Parth also expressed a need to engage in a better way with the judiciary, adding that NISA hasn’t filed any petition in the Supreme Court so far, since the implications of having an unfavourable judgment are serious.
Talking about the way forward for NISA, Parth reminded attendees that Dilip Thakore, Editor of EducationWorld, had agreed at the Summit, to list top 100 BPS in his magazine. He urged NISA members to participate in this and start working in their respective states to identify these schools. He added that NISA should try to become a brand for quality BPS (like ISASA in South Africa)—as suggested by MP, Shri Vijay Goel in his opening address at SLS. A great way of doing this would be to ensure that NISA Schools fulfill the four NISA norms that were agreed upon in one of the previous national meetings:

1. Safe school buildings
2. Separate toilet for boys and girls and overall hygiene
3. Minimum 9 sq ft per-child space
4. Better learning outcomes

**SPEAKER:**
Rohan Joshi (Associate Director, Advocacy, Centre for Civil Society)

Rohan presented the agenda for the day and got a quick round of suggestions from the participants on the agenda. Setting expectations for the meeting, Rohan urged the participants to brainstorm on key challenges that each state, as well as BPS sector at large, is facing in the country and come up with a strategy that will help tackle these challenges in near future. Meril Antony (Research Associate, Centre for Civil Society) presented findings from recent research on Punjab School Closure Study, Cost of Compliance and RTE 2.0.

**STATEMENTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF STATE ASSOCIATIONS**


The state representative from J&K expressed his satisfaction at being a part of the Alliance for the first time. He mentioned that J&K is educationally backward, but the private schools are doing very well, and giving good results. However, they are not getting much
encouragement from the government. 92 schools got grant-in-aid from the government in the 1970s and this number remained at 92 till 2004. The grants process was stopped after that. There are more than 10,000 schools in the state, which do not receive any aid from the government. 80 percent of teachers teaching in the government schools are untrained. The Association of Budget Private schools have currently managed to get a stay on closure of schools under State Education Act which has norms such as size of principal’s room (at least 600 square feet of space).

They also expressed their support on the issue of NISA certification.

2. Assam (Rajiv Kalita):

The representative from Assam mentioned that last year, 68 schools received notices of school closure from Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) and Guwahati Municipal Development Authority (GMDA) for not fulfilling the norms of School Safety under Assam Non-Government Educational Institutions (Management and Regulation) Act, 2005. A 7-point notice issued by GMC to all private schools in Guwahati asked the schools to work on disaster management/safety of the school—fire extinguishers, two sets of staircases, etc. They have also questioned running of schools in residential premises.

3. Punjab (Devraj Pahuja):

Mr Pahuja stated that in 2011, all schools in Punjab were associated. They had constituted a committee—three members from the Punjab Board and the Government, and five from the Associations, to decide upon recognition norms and recognition process for private schools. Now, the Association Board has released a new set of norms which are at par with RTE norms in terms of infrastructure requirements. Recently they have launched an online form asking private schools to fill in the information on status of infrastructure and teacher qualification, among many others. This demand has come up rather abruptly and has no rationale. The implications of filling in this form are grave since the Department of Education has already cautioned 4,700 private schools in the state to fill in the form or face closure. Punjab Private Schools Organization (PPSO), has boycotted the proforma. They are doing a Daandi March in Punjab to launch a fresh program and strategy on 2nd October, post which they will meet bureaucrats, politicians and ministers.
4. Rajasthan (C L Rose):

C L Rose stated that the RTE has not particularly posed any significant challenges ahead of the existing schools at the moment, although Rajasthan is the first state in the country to implement the RTE. However, it is important while talking about RTE, to not just talk about the existing schools, but also about the upcoming or new schools. Rajasthan is the only state after Karnataka to have a Fees Commission. Their issue is that five people in the entire Rajasthan decide the fees of over 37,500 schools. The details of this are available on www.dee.raj.nic.in and www.shikshaparivar.com. They are looking to challenge this and argue for no regulation of fees by Dept of Education.

5. Telangana (Madhusudan):

Telangana has a stay order from the High Court against the fee commission; hence the government at the moment cannot decide fees for private schools. Going forward they mentioned that they would like NISA Secretariat’s support in taking up the issue of fees control with State Government. In terms of RTE implementation, schools in the state have not been facing many issues, since the administrative processes post division of Andhra Pradesh into two states are yet to be established. In Telangana, as well as in other states, they suggested having a survey on the contribution of BPS to Indian education, specifically to identify how BPS have benefitted students, teachers, school owners and service providers.

On a separate note, they mentioned that the NISA secretariat should make the membership form available online so that school owners and new potential members can become members easily.

6. Gujarat (Ekta Sodha):

Ekta Sodha said that in Gujarat, the RTE implementation began somewhere in 2012. In 2013-14, the government selected eight districts and created more than 5,000 seats for admissions under Section 12 of RTE. In every district, a select number of seats were reserved under RTE. In Jamnagar, there have been no admissions under RTE. However, this year, schools in the district have admitted 165/250 admissions—including Ms Sodha’s school. However, no schools received any notification or reimbursement from the government. On contacting the Directorate of Education, it was found that he also had no information. It was suggested that the government buy lands and build schools, and let the private entrepreneurs run those schools. The Gujarat government is exploring the potential of initiating something across these lines. Recently under Van Bandhu Vikas Yojana of the Government of Gujarat, private entrepreneurs were invited to open schools in the tribal areas of Gujarat.
The biggest challenge ahead is of corruption—opening new schools is very difficult in Gujarat, despite completion of all documentation.

7. Goa (Vijay Shetty):

Mr Shetty said that the 57 schools part of their association in Goa haven’t faced any challenges so far vis-à-vis the RTE. The state government has not shown any particular interest in RTE implementation. In fact, Goa was the last state to notify RTE rules. The association has 57 members (having grown from 12 in 2009), including BPS and bigger schools. There is no implementation of the fee-structure committee. Nobody asks about the 25% reservation rule.

He stated that the association would like to contribute to the NISA Secretariat in any way they could, and make their membership official by October 2014.

8. Sikkim (Namgyal):

The representative from Sikkim stated that the State has two types of schools—aided and unaided. The Sikkim Government implemented RTE in 2010. As such, schools have no problems with the RTE. At present, the BPS which don’t fulfill the requirement get two years for compliance. But they are facing issues with the land norms (especially in the hilly areas). They expressed their hope of getting support from NISA.
9. Uttarakhand (Mahaveer Upadhyay):

In Uttarakhand, 2,044 government schools are shutting down, which the Department of Education now wants to run in Public Private Partnership. Mr Upadhayay said that private schools would definitely like to run those schools—but fulfilling the land norms in nine of their hilly districts is very difficult.

He also said that Teacher Eligibility Test is an important issue in the State, they have demanded review of this section in the RTE. They feel that there should be some exemption for teachers with more than five years teaching experience, and expressed that they would like NISA to write to Secretary, Education regarding this and send a copy of the letter to them, which they can use to follow up with the government.

10. Odisha (Sudipto Mohanty):

Odisha was represented at the National Meeting for the first time. The representative stated that they are currently not having too many issues with the government on opening and running BPS—getting No Objection Certificates has not been an issue. They also haven’t heard about any closures of BPS. But a number of government-aided schools have been closed down.

11. Maharashtra (Bharat Malik):

Mr Malik said that the RTE has been implemented in the state, and their schools have admitted a number of students under Section 12, almost 6,000 children this year alone. However, schools haven’t received reimbursements from government for almost three years now. While there have been some media reports, they said they hadn’t heard of any schools closing down at the moment. Apart from Fees Regulation, private schools in the state haven’t faced any challenge from the government recently.
12. Bihar (D K Singh):

The Bihar associations have been associated with NISA since its inception. Mr Singh said that around 100 (of 580 CBSE and 31 CICSE) schools in Bihar have started admissions under Section 12 of RTE. However, none of the schools have received reimbursements from the State Government. The State has around 25,000 non-affiliated schools. State affiliation requires a number of stringent fulfillments, which is the main reason why the schools directly go to the CBSE. NISA is seen as a protector of non-affiliated schools in Bihar and Jharkhand.

13. Haryana (Kulbhushan Sharma):

In Haryana, Mr Sharma said they had a couple of issues with school closures. The first step taken was to go to the court. Secondly, they pressurised the government and asked the schools to reapply for recognition. They got recognition norms relaxed for the older schools, and also applied for further relaxation. They have not let a single school close down in Haryana due to RTE norms. However, Section 12 has posed challenges. The Association is fighting for patches (in land norms) and shifts for running schools in Haryana. Mr Sharma expressed that there is a need to (1) try and communicate better and gain maximum media coverage, (2) lobby with the government as much as possible. CBSE/Boards shouldn’t be the recognising bodies. They should only be the checking papers, not schools. School’s issues should be nationalised now—and there should be some form of public protest in the near future in Delhi.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Rohan Joshi opened the discussion, summarising the key takeaways from the previous days SLS:

- NISA-mark schools
- Top 100 BPS project in collaboration with EducationWorld
- Positive stories from BPS in different states (Boondein state versions)
- Demand Letter from NISA to be presented to MPs that have promised to take up these issues in parliament
- Research

He put forward the agenda of the focus group discussion, which was to brainstorm on which issues are important for NISA, and then create a plan for follow up on the ideas discussed in SLS. As a product of the discussion, the following decisions were taken:

1. Demand Letter to Members of Parliament:

All states should send their Demand Letters to NISA Secretariat via email within a week. NISA Secretariat will compile the list of demands and send the same to MPs that attended the NISA SLS, as well those who are involved in Education. R C Jain (President, NISA) will help getting an appointment with MHRD and PM once the letter is sent out from Secretariat.
2. NISA Minimum Standards for Member Schools

Since four norms for quality were previously agreed on, decision was to continue with the same and aim at getting the norms fulfilled across all NISA Member schools. However some members felt differently about the norms pertaining to infrastructure such as 9 sq ft space per child, and it was decided that they would communicate their alternative suggestions to the members.

3. Stories of Hope from BPS

*Boondien*, the coffee table book, has proven to be very useful in reaching out to wider catchment of stakeholders and convince them of the contribution that BPS are making in delivering quality education. It would be useful if many more states publish such books at state level, covering the success stories of alumni of BPS. NISA Secretariat is currently working with the Haryana state association on one such book and will support any other state in terms of structuring and content of the book in the future.

4. Quality of BPS

State meetings organised by different states throughout the year should have some space for Service Providers to make presentations on various quality improvement products relevant to BPS. NISA Secretariat will develop partnerships with various service providers. Other than tie-ups with service providers state associations should initiate quality improvement programs in member schools, e.g. STiR program in Punjab and Haryana

5. Sustainability

It is important that State Associations collect data forms from schools in their respective states. Post SLS, all states will initiate a process of filling up school data forms. The following states have committed to collecting data forms and membership fees from associated schools by end of October 2014:

- Telangana
- Sikkim
- Goa

The following states will do the same by January 2015:

- Haryana
- Jammu and Kashmir
- Assam
- Punjab
- Rajasthan
- Maharashtra