

Minutes of the Meeting of Core Group on Children held on 10th January, 2020 at National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi

A meeting of the Core Group on Children was held on 10 January 2020 at 11:00 a.m. at Room No.508, Manav Adhikar Bhawan, NHRC. The meeting was chaired by Smt. Jyotika Kalra, Hon'ble Member, NHRC, Co-Chaired by Shri Jaideep Govind, Secretary-General, Shri Prabhat Singh, Director General (Investigations), Shri Surajit Dey, Registrar (Law), Smt. Anita Sinha, Joint Secretary, along with other officials of NHRC.

Shri Jaideep Govind, Secretary-General, NHRC welcomed all the members and gave a brief description of the agenda items and the discussions that took place in the first Core Group meeting held on 20.11.2018. Thereafter, welcoming the newly constituted members, Hon'ble Member Smt. Jyotika Kalra discussed about the minutes of the first core group meeting and expressed her displeasure that the states concerned have not taken much action over the recommendations made.

The Secretary-General further briefly discussed the agenda items of the meeting and requested the core group members for their comments and recommendations.

Agenda Item-1: Malnutrition among Children in India

Honourable Member, Smt. Jyotika Kalra, opened the discussion on malnutrition among children in India by highlighting the need for region or state specific data as she quoted the country-specific data. She pointed out that as per the census of 2011, in India, there are 16.45 crore children in the age group 0-6 years and 37.24 crore in the age group 0-14 years who together constitute almost 40% of the total population of 121.1 crore. She further added that as per a report by CRY, India has the maximum number of malnourished children in the world, with 1 in every 3 children being malnourished and that malnutrition at a young age can render the children ill for the rest of their lives. With the Right to Food Act ensuring food for everyone, the ICDS Scheme ensuring food at different stages of the child's growth- from the prenatal period to the age of 6 years, and despite the all other laws & schemes in place, why are children still growing malnourished? It is to find answer to this question and to figure out what further measures can be adopted to ensure that every child gets nutritious food is why the Commission has taken up this topic, she said. It is to together find out and adopt strategies such as if vegetables and fruits can be cultivated within the school compounds itself, whether school children can be provided with food even on holidays, and so on to effectively tackle the issue of malnutrition among children.

Ms. Bharti Ali, Co-Founder and Executive Director, HAQ Centre for Child Rights, highlighted that the present budget for children in institutional care is only rupees two thousand per child per month. She reflected that it is inadequate keeping in mind the protection of children's right including supply of adequate and balanced nutrition to them. She further submitted that the Ministry concerned is in the process of revising the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) that would be useful to consider revision in the per child budget. She expressed concerns while drawing attention of the Commission regarding malnutrition and early

childhood care of brick-kiln workers as these workers and their children suffer the most because of facing violation of their rights. Lastly she also suggested that the practices as followed in private schools by private parties have to be taken into account and followed. Similarly, she mentioned that the agencies concerned should ensure children in institutional care are able to enjoy all rights including adequate and balanced nutrition. She suggested public hearing in partnership with organizations that work in brick kiln area to get the real picture and issue necessary directions from the department concerned to brick kiln owners and contractors to comply with constitutional guarantees, existing laws and child rights commitments.

Ms. Razia Ismail, Co-founder & Convener, Indian Alliance for Child Rights (IACR), pointed out that nutrition provision for children must be targeted to reach every child with needed food provision at the right age and stage of childhood. All children experience a first growth spurt and a second growth spurt, and both are essential for their full healthy development. Provision needs to be assured at the right phase of growth. If this timing is missed, it cannot be compensated. The second growth spurt in girl children is 9-11 years, and in boys 11-14 years. For girls, this is when critically important pelvic growth takes place. Girls who miss this step might face lifelong risk of unsafe child bearing. The national Scheme for Adolescent Girls provides for nutrition, as one of its six objectives, targets girls aged 11-14 years for nutrition, thus missing almost two-thirds of the three-year target age block. The scheme deserves review and correction. Measures and provisions for both very young and school-age children elude the State's duty to address the rights and needs of children outside the reach of ICDS and Mid-day Meals.

Professor Anita Julka, Department of Education of Groups with Special Needs, NCERT, mentioned that very high levels of malnutrition in India persisted despite strong constitutional, legislative policy, plan and programme commitment. She emphasized that training of parents and children is important. Malnutrition is considerably higher in rural than in urban area and short birth intervals are associated with higher levels of under nutrition. Under-nutrition is more common for children of mothers who are undernourished themselves than for children whose mothers are not undernourished. She reflected that because of poverty and exclusion, the greatest risk of all forms of malnutrition is shouldered by the most disadvantaged children. Lastly, she iterated how malnutrition affects women more than it affects men due to specific nutrition needs of women during adolescence, pregnancy, and lactation.

Professor Asha Bajpai, School of Law, TISS, Mumbai, pointed out non-implementation of NFS Act, 2013 which is an act with life cycle and rights-based approach. The data required for implementation of NFS Act demanded attention. She mentioned lacking of multi-sectoral approach and added that schemes do not reach children in Institutions and disabled and vulnerable groups and corruption present in NREGA, Mid-Day Meal Scheme. She iterated that systems viz., PDS have to be monitored and lacunae should be identified immediately. At the last she emphasized upon the need for monitoring and accountability of enforcement of laws and schemes within the country.

Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Country Director, UNICEF India, submitted that India has made significant strides in addressing nutritional deficiencies in children. She acknowledged that despite much progress, a significant proportion of children still remain malnourished and

anemia among women (15-49 years) remains high. To this fact, she added that we need to look into the causes of malnutrition and not just non-availability of food but what kind of food is being provided; its nutritional properties should be taken into consideration as emotional and cognitive developments in early 3 years of childhood is very important. She further referred concluding observations made by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC's Article 6) where the Government of India were to emphasize the need to tackle the existing malnutrition problem in India and ensure that not only appropriate resources are allocated for this problem but also best practices like breastfeeding are promoted.

She appreciated that Government of India has introduced policy and legislative measures to improve the situation of children. These are, National Child Policy, 2013, National Food Security Act, 2013 (Right to Food Act), supplementary feeding programme of the Anganwadi services under the umbrella of Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, the School Mid-day Meal Scheme, the Public Distribution System and the Maternity Benefits Programme. She added that although appropriate programmes are now in place, however, data suggests that only a fraction (1.6%) of households receive the full complement of essential nutrition services in the first 1000 days of life. Hence, policies are in place but implementation is required. Also, there is now increasing need to focus on the following (a) Improving diets of young children, (b) Early detection and provision of care and treatment for children with severe acute malnutrition, (c) Improving nutrition of adolescent girls and women.

Ms. Jyoti Duhan Rathee, Member, Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights, pointed out current scenario of malnutrition and submitted different causes of malnutrition, viz., child marriage, social status, poverty, lack of awareness on nutrition needs and processes, inadequate housing, water and sanitation.

Ms. Samyukta Subramanian & Ms. Purna Makkar, Pratham Education Foundation submitted that to address simultaneously the triple-burden of nutrition – under-nutrition, micronutrients deficiencies and overweight are important to attend. A nutritional policy should focus on healthy balanced diets and food system. They further mentioned that diets are very poor in the first year of life and mothers' education is a key factor associated with dietary diversity. Secondly, mothers' knowledge about their children's health is weak. Thirdly, access to safe water is still a big challenge. They also submitted that there is a need for a comprehensive review on implementation to identify main gaps. For this, experience in both research and implementation is needed. A methodology to undertake an independent, concurrent review of implementation effectiveness of nutrition interventions is recommended. It is needed to identify mechanisms to strengthen existing government delivery systems, including through promoting effective collaborations.

Dr. Indrani Bhattacharyya, Dy. Director, CINI, Kolkata, submitted that malnutrition is a major public health concern in India. It disproportionately affects disadvantaged population sub groups of the country, affecting both their short term and long term health status. Child malnutrition rates are still unacceptably high in the country. The pattern is similar for different states of the country as well. In March 2018, the Government of India launched its ambitious “**Poshan Abhiyaan**” to tackle the issue of malnutrition. However despite various flagship

programmes of the government the threat of wide spread child malnutrition still remains. Therefore a multipronged approach is necessary to tackle the scourge.

Ms. Ridhima Puri, Junior Research Consultant, NHRC cited the inspiring model that should be emulated by other districts, the model is named as 'Kan Sikul, Kan Huan' (English translation: 'My School, My Farm') which is an initiative of the district administration of Aizwal specially designed to address malnutrition in the district. This initiative seeks to fulfill the dietary and nutritional needs of children. Where each school and anganwadi centre in Aizwal has a small kitchen and nutrition garden on terrace. These schools and anganwadis source their own fruit/vegetable seeds and compost from the district administration and the children are encouraged to produce their own food organically and recognize the environmental advantages.

Dr. J.H. Panwal, Jt. Tech. Advisor, (National Nutrition Mission), Ministry Of Women And Child Development, submitted that Hon'ble Prime Minister had launched POSHAN Abhiyaan – PM's overarching scheme for holistic nourishment (earlier known as National Nutrition Mission) from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan on 8th March, 2018. The Abhiyaan aims to reduce malnutrition in the country through a life cycle approach, by adopting a synergized and result-oriented approach. The plan for fortified rice and region wise diet chart is under preparation in 21 vernacular languages. Target is to bring down stunting of the children in the age group of 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by the year 2022. Major components of POSHAN Abhiyaan are information and communication technology enabled Integrated Child Development Services-Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS) for strengthening service delivery and interventions; strengthening training & capacity building, community mobilization & Behaviour Change & Communication (BCC), convergence, incentives and innovation.

Dr. Kiran Modi, Founder Managing Trustee, Udayan Care mentioned about children without parental care (CWPC), or children, who are orphans, abandoned, surrendered, trafficked, and often abused in their early childhood years and who live in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) as long term care is essential for their overall development. This group of children and young adults constitute the most forgotten, uncounted and 'below the line' vulnerable category of individuals and there is a strong need for special support and attention of the Government at different levels. She mentioned some of the key areas that need intervention with possible suggestions. First, the status of children, especially girls, living in CCIs with presence of anemia levels, is not identified and government drives do not reach out to such children. Mapping of health status of all children living in CCIs can be conducted so that early intervention and steps for prevention can be undertaken. Secondly, often, girls with early and teenage pregnancy are sent to CCIs that do not have the staff trained with specialized expertise to care for the nutritional and other needs of such expecting mothers as well as the new born child. It also creates a lot of unsettlement amongst children staying there from before, especially if such cases are related to elopement and run-away cases. CWCs can be asked to refer such cases to such shelter homes where the specific needs of such children can be met. Thirdly, children living in CCIs have been excluded from large flagship schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat scheme or the PM-JAY Scheme. This exclusion is because most of these schemes base the selection criterion on the income status of the family – but for most CWPC and orphan children living in CCIs, the family is absent and they cannot provide income certificate of family.

Ms. Hasina Kharbhih, Chairperson, Impulse Network NGO, reflected her concerns over malnutrition amongst children due to lack of income sources in the family. From her extensive research in villages, she revealed how the villagers would send their children to do odd jobs like serving tea at tea stalls or even for mining in rat hole mining in Meghalaya. The traffickers take this opportunity to lure the children with promises of huge amount of money, well-paid jobs and cross them over to other states, districts and across national boundaries.

Shri Bhuwan Ribhu, Bachpan Bachao Andolan talked majorly about the neglected state of children in the country when they are engaged in work that deprives them of adequate education, health, leisure and basic freedoms, violating their rights. He said that amongst these poor children, more than half are exposed to the worst forms of child labour such as work in hazardous environments, slavery, or other forms of forced labour, illicit activities such as drug trafficking and prostitution etc., which demands coercive action from the government.

Hon'ble Member Smt Jyotika Kalra highlighted that government run Child Care Institutions (CCI) are not utilized fully, whereas privately-run CCIs are overcrowded. She emphasized that timely inspections and follow up actions should be carried out meticulously as per the guidelines.

Smt. Priti Mahara, CRY, submitted that India is a young nation with 40 percent of its total population below the age of 18 years. One of the most daunting issues that children face today is 'Malnutrition'. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identify hunger and malnutrition as a huge barrier for development and aims to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, making sure all people especially children have sufficient and nutritious food all year round.

Smt. Sunita Gupta Member, Child Welfare Committee iterated that there is a need to spread awareness on nutrition to the parents and children in rural areas, where advertisements on nutritional food, diet charts should be displayed so that by actions in the television even the uneducated ones can see and learn from the same.

Smt. Jyotika Kalra, Hon'ble Member, concluded the discussion on Agenda Item I: Malnutrition among Children in India by acknowledging the different suggestion that such as linking farms to schools and ensuring adequate payment to anganwadi workers. She then brought the attention of the core group members to the second agenda item of the day.

Agenda Item-II: Quality Education among Children in India

Smt. Jyotika Kalra, Hon'ble Member, began the discussion by inviting the eminent core group members to highlight the gaps in existing system and recommend suggestions that can plug these gaps concerning the topic of quality education among children in India. She remarked that while with nutritious food we are able to ensure physical and mental health of the

children, however, these children can be turned into nation-building assets only when they get quality education; education that makes them knowledgeable, which enhances their skill, and helps them in earning their livelihood.

Ms. Razia Ismail submitted that every child has the right to be in school to learn and to develop a spirit of enquiry. Today's young learners are also receiving un-controlled access to on-line platforms and cyberspace and are influenced by these, as well. How can children be guided? The current development of a new national policy on education is timely. One clear and urgent need is the training of school-teachers. Another priority is the content of school education. Climate change is a stark reality around the world. India is already affected. Children must become part of human effort to care for a changing planet.

Shri Surajit Dey, Registrar (Law), NHRC discussed about the educational challenges that have been prevalent at both the centre and states for many years in India and how the Right to Education Act, 2009 mapped out the roles and responsibilities for not just the centre but also state and all local bodies to rectify gaps in their education system in order to enhance the quality of education and ensuring all around development of the children.

Professor Anita Julka submitted that India is a multicultural and multilingual society made up of numerous regional and local cultures, languages and dialects. People's religious beliefs, ways of life and their understanding of social relationships are quite diverse. All groups have equal rights to co-exist and flourish, and the education system needs to respond to the cultural pluralism inherent in our society. National Plan of Action 1992 and policies (National Policy on Education 1968 and 1986, National Nutrition Policy 1993, Health Policy 2002), the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the Government of India; the Right to Education Act, 2009 and NEP, 2019/20, all are aimed at ensuring holistic development of the child. Review of the implementation of RTE Act, 2009 leaves much to be desired. Also, the Samagra Shiksha - an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12 has been initiated in 2018 with the broader goal of improving school effectiveness measured in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcomes. It subsumes the three schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

She reflected that the present day classroom practices are totally dominated by textbooks. What is needed is a package of teaching-learning material that can be used by both teachers and children to engage the child in active learning and teaching. It important to assess each child's learning in order to ensure that quality education is provided. The nature of evaluation should be based on the very experiences that the learner goes through while learning. Processes are to be assessed rather than simply looking at the end product in terms of marks or grades. The exercise of revising the school curriculum with the aim of revitalizing school education cannot be achieved without addressing the need for creating reflective teachers.

Smt. Anita Sinha, Joint Secretary, NHRC discussed upon the importance of nutrition intake among the children and suggested that with a view of enhancing enrollment, retention and

attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children there is a requirement of even providing breakfast under the Mid-day Meal Scheme.

Professor Asha Bajpai discussed about the decision in NEP 2019 for free & compulsory quality education for extending to pre-primary. She mentioned limitations in the NEP, viz., (a) Some important norms relating to free books or trained teachers in RTE relaxed in NEP 2019, (b) No Detention Policy brought back in NEP 2019, (c) Need for a creative curriculum and teachers training for ECCE, (d) Good initiatives in education like ICT and E Pathshalas to be adapted, replicated and scaled up, (e) No coordination between various schemes like SSA, Beti Bachao, Bharat Padhe Bharat Badhe , ICDS, Mid Day meal schemes.

Ms. Bharti Ali shared concerns and invited attention of the Commission on prevailing situation of malnutrition; early childhood care and education of children of brick kiln workers as these workers face violation of all rights and their children suffer the most. The second is regarding the frequent changes in school curriculum and examination pattern as well as compelling private schools to follow the NCERT textbooks when they can subscribe to better books that will enhance the quality of education and teachers should not be involved into any other duties like election, administration etc, the focus should be on teaching. Third concern is regarding children in institutional care and ensuring that they are able to enjoy all rights, including adequate nutrition and education. As regards children in institutional care, fact finding missions across different states looking into the denial and violation of health, nutrition, education and development rights is required on an urgent basis, as often enough the economic, social and cultural rights receive less attention. The per-child budget for children in institutional care under the ICPS is only two thousand rupees per child per month, which is inadequate if these rights are to be met. As the Ministry is in the process of revising the ICPS, it will be useful to consider revision in per child budget too.

Smt. Jyoti Duhane Rathee submitted that a lot of the children are out of school and when they are out of school, there are more chance of being abused, trafficked. Lots of efforts should be done on quality education. There is a strong requirement of spreading more awareness on community level for mandate format enrollment in regular schools, if students are not attending regularly, message must go to parents, SMS service must be strengthened, more focus must be on quality education. Regular sensitization of teachers must be done on CSA JJ Act, psychological issues, and substance abuse.

Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Country Director, UNICEF, submitted that India, over the last two decades, has made great strides in improving access to quality education which has increased elementary school enrollment and reduced the number of out-of-school children. These achievements have been bolstered by key laws, policies and programmes such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and its subsequent amendments in 2017; the National Early Childhood Care and Education (NECCE) Policy 2013 and the integrated school education scheme, *Samagra Shiksha*, 2018.

The draft National Education Policy (NEP, 2019) recognizes that access to quality education as a fundamental right. The draft (NEP, 2019) provides hope and opportunities to

change education in India if it is supported with adequate policies, planning, funding and close vigilance. There is need to reduce the curriculum load to its essential content, making space for more holistic, experiential, analytical and discussion-based learning. There is need for mirroring transformation of the curriculum by an honest transformation of teaching and the assessment system. Although the draft policy's vision of a foundational stage of education for children aged 3-8 is welcome and potentially groundbreaking, it would be important to ensure that there are close co-ordination mechanisms between the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the existing National ECCE Policy, National ECCE Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards be taken into cognizance and built upon. There is a need to ensure that rights of children and persons with disabilities are adequately reflected in the draft policy. Also, it must be ensured that the policy calls for zero tolerance for discrimination on any basis and for violence, abuse and harassment in and around schools.

The education system in India needs to address the issues related to (a) knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes of today's children and young people and how they need to thrive and succeed in life, (b) how the education system can better support the development of these knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes, (c) how to ensure that all children in India can succeed in school, with equal access and opportunities to learn in a safe and inclusive environment. She also added that moving the quality education forward requires a greater focus on ensuring that legislation and policies in place are implemented, with requisite budget allocations and effective expenditure. Access to quality education should be expanded to encompass pre-school to secondary education for all girls and boys so that all are prepared for the world of work, citizenship and their lives ahead in this changing world.

Ms. Samyukta Subramanian & Ms. Prerna Makkar from Pratham Foundation pointed out various gaps and limitation in quality Education. The learning crisis in India is evident in terms of what children across different grades can and cannot do in terms of basic reading and math. They recommended (a) to focus on building foundational skills. The curriculum requires review and recalibration as per the learning needs of children. The existing curricular load should be drastically reduced and replaced by content that focuses on strengthening the foundational skills (b) Sex-wise trends in enrollment trajectories and learning levels should be observed closely to ensure that both boys and girls are able to acquire foundational skills and provided with additional support where required, (c) The draft NEP and SDG 4 emphasize the importance of early childhood care and education. To make this a reality in India, convergence between all government departments providing pre-school and school education is important. Anganwadis and schools should be aligned towards the goal of providing quality early childhood education to every child, (d) While quality of learning remains poor, assessments in this space need to take into account the fact that if children cannot read satisfactorily, using pen-and-paper tests to assess would not be appropriate, (e) Mechanisms to keep children enrolled in school especially between ages 14 -18 years need to be devised. Dual focus on foundational skills like basic reading and math along with vocational skills must be a priority in the older years, (f) Active involvement of school systems with parents is important. Teachers need to understand the situation at home, build gender awareness with parents and share concrete ways in which parents can support their children's learning. .

Dr. Indrani Bhattacharyya, CINI, Kolkata, recommended to address issues, viz., (a) Micro-planning should be done to identify the vulnerable children who need special attention and to link them under the services of education, e.g., children in the closed tea gardens, child labour, children in need of care and protection, specially-abled children, street children, orphans, girls taking care of younger siblings, etc. (b) The new National Education policy is talking about free education for the children from 03 years to 18 years, which is under the Department of School Education. However, the pre-school education from 03 years to 06 years is under the Department of Women and Child Development. A critical convergence gap is there between the two Departments, which is very critical for the continuum of quality education. (c) Free education of children from 15 to 18 years should be included under the 'Right to Education Act', which has already come in National Education Policy (d) To retain girls in school, which will ultimately prevent child marriage, teen pregnancy and other issues, parents and community engagement and participation of them in school development plan is very essential. Also engagement of local self-government is critical in this issue in both rural and urban area (e) For strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education [ECCE], community engagement and participation should be strengthened in Anganwadi Centres. It was piloted in West Bengal, by observing a monthly ECCE day engaging community, which resulted into a meaningful outcome, (f) To address issues during the adolescent age, 10 to 19 years, especially sexual reproductive health, mental health, psycho-social issues, gender studies and life skills education by incorporating them in the school curricula (g) Engagement of children to promote education (h) Integration of technology and use of it to promote education (i) Strengthening of Village/Ward Level Child Protection Committee [VLCPC/WLCPC] under the Government program 'Integrated Child Protection Scheme [ICPS]' under the WCD Department is very much necessary. That is the only platform where participation of children as official member is in the policy and through child participation promotion of education can be done with support from other adult members in the committee, (j) Convergence issues should be emphasized more, e.g., to do joint need-based micro-planning for the quality services in ICDS centres and school, convergence between the service providers from WCD, school education is important, along with ensuring participation of community and local self-government. There is a need to link families of vulnerable children with livelihood opportunities, (k) Finally, integration between the health, education, nutrition and protection of rights of children.

Dr. Kiran Modi submitted that most children coming to CCIs do not have adequate identity documents such as birth certificate, Aadhar card and other documents such as transfer certificates. Their admission to school becomes a big hurdle due to this reason. Again, she said this is because most of these children do not have families and hence cannot provide income certificate. The RTE Act of 2009 is silent on special provisions for such children as a result most States are not issuing EWS certificates to orphan children. Also, the new National Education Policy of 2019 has excluded orphan children from the new category it has created. Lack of opportunities and drop outs at higher education level due to lack of affirmative action in educational institutions are to be looked into. When children in CCIs turn 18 years and leave them they hardly get any aftercare support if they want to go for higher studies. Most children and youth from CCIs face stigma and discrimination in schools and colleges because they do not have parents and families to look after them. Often teachers are not sensitive to their unique needs, especially that little things can trigger their trauma and early adverse childhood

experiences. Usually entry age in CCI is 10 years or above, most children come between 14 - 16 years (RTE Act 2009 coverage is only upto 14 years).

Ms. Priti Mahara, CRY, Delhi, reflected how necessary it is to ensure an inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all to addressing the issue of quality education for all children in India and attaining SDG Goal 4. She emphasized the importance of early learning for cognitive development. For children between the ages of 3 years to 6 years, pre-school education is essential not only for their cognitive development but also in terms of preparing them for school. The National Early Childhood Care and Education Policy 2013 clearly outlines the infrastructural and human resource requirements. The National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework and Quality Standards, 2013 approved by the Govt. of India is yet to be fully implemented. The findings from NFHS 4 revealed that preschool education had only 40 per cent coverage in 2016 (Poshan Data Note No. 4, July 2018). The education system of India continues to focus more on primary education with substantially higher number of primary schools as compared to upper primary and secondary levels of schooling. For schools outside accessible distance and without basic infrastructure such as all-weather classrooms, boundary walls, functional toilets and safe drinking water, attending school would be a challenge for children, especially from vulnerable communities living in remote areas and harsh weather conditions. Without a safe and conducive environment, it would be impractical to hope for improved learning outcomes. Another important aspect linked with quality education is the presence of qualified teachers as per RTE norms. The country needs to invest in increasing number of secondary schools. While the RTE Act guarantees the same at the elementary level, the scenario is rather different at Secondary level since it is provided through the RMSA Scheme under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. She suggested that all the existing schemes should be revisited and evaluated to achieve quality education.

Shri Daniel E. Richards, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities submitted that Madrasas education to be inclusive of Science, Mathematics and Technical Education in order to make the courses of Madrasas equivalent to other educational institutions (b) Children passing out from Madrasas should also be treated at par with the children passing out of the regular educational institutions for the purpose of higher education and employment also. NCM sometimes receive petitions that children passing out from Madrasas are not treated at par with other children while getting admission in higher studies or in jobs. It is recommended that the children passing out from registered Madrasas may be given status at par with the other children.

Dr. Sila Deb, Dy Commissioner, Department of Health and Family Welfare submitted that Ministry of Health has initiated several programme to address malnutrition among the children. She further added that State is mainly responsible to see the malnutrition of the children. The rural citizens, due to lack of awareness of their rights, could not avail benefits extended by various civil authorities/local governments. Quality learning in our schools - classrooms cannot be achieved through ad-hoc measures. All these dimensions are critical if we are to move successfully towards quality education that is enjoyable and found to be interesting and useful by all children in our country. She mentioned points of action for quality education such as creating a child-friendly inclusive environment. Children will only learn in an

atmosphere where they feel safe, secure, valued, respected and are not unduly stressed by the fear of examinations. At last, she said the curriculum and multiplicity of teaching alongwith the learning material is important.

Lastly, **Hon'ble Member, Smt. Jyotika Kalra** added, that while a change in the education system is already under process, more focus should be on inclusion of technology to improve the quality education to support students with diverse abilities and needs, cultural backgrounds, experiences and learning styles; that the budgetary allocation for education should be increased; and that there should be special focus on availability and accessibility of education in naxal affected areas.

Major Gaps(G) and Recommendations (R) emanated from the meeting :

G1: Lacunae in Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) as it misses the crucial ages of growth spurt in girls.

R1: The Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) should be reviewed to add that nutritional provisions are also assured between the age of 9 and 11 years.

Action by: Ministry of Women and Child Development

G2: Gaps in the reach of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS).

R2: Mid-Day Meal scheme to include breakfast and meals on holiday that will serve the purpose of MDM Scheme.

Action by: Ministry of Human Resource Development

G3: Requirement of supporting data for proper implementation of National Food Security Act, 2013.

R3: Data collection should be done by means of survey, mapping of population for tribal, scheduled castes, other backward classes and rural and remote areas on periodic basis for identifying the left-out potential beneficiaries.

Action by: Ministry of Home Affairs

G5: The per-child budget under ICPS is insufficient.

R5: The per-child budget under ICPS should be periodically increased over Rs 2000 per child so that the needs of children are met appropriately considering inflation.

Action by: Ministry of Women and Child Development

G6: Lack of awareness on children's nutrition among family members needs leading to aggravated malnutrition in them.

R6: Awareness should be generated among parents about the nutritional needs of their children pertaining to the various stages of their development. This should be done through simple and

easy to grasp methods such as advertisements on television, radio and in schools so that even illiterate parents are able to comprehend it.

Action by: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

G7: The benefits of many important schemes do not reach children in institutional care due to lack of requisite documents.

R7: Requisite documents such as family income certificate, identity proof, etc. should be insisted upon for children in institutional care and they be covered under various schemes by providing nutrition and education even when they do not possess the

*Action by: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Ministry of Human Resource Development*

G8: Government run CCIs are not fully utilized, whereas private run CCIs are overcrowded.

R8: Timely inspection and follow up action and sensitisation of child welfare committees should be carried out as per government guidelines.

Action by: Ministry of Women and Child Development, NHRC

G9: The Right to Education Act, 2009 does not consider children between the age of 0-6 years and 14-18 years under the purview. Neither does the act focus on provisions for children with disabilities. This means the act does not cover all children.

R9: The Right to Education Act, 2009 needs to be reviewed. Further, the proposed National Education Policy, 2019 also needs to be revised with respect to children without parental care and children in CCIs and also to include convergence of all departments concerned.

Action by: Ministry of Human Resource Development

G10: Content of school education is outdated and textbook-centred.

R10: School curriculum revision is required to include relevant material. Quality education should focus on building foundational skills and developing knowledge, skills and competencies.

Action by: Ministry of Human Resource Development

G11: Implementation gaps in schemes such as MDMS, PDS, etc

R11: Close monitoring and implementation of schemes so that the benefits reach the people for whom it is devised.

*Action by: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Home
Affairs*