



Miles to go...

Mid – Point Report
on
Millennium Development Goals
in
Tamil Nadu

07-07-2007

Presented by:

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Executive Summary

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent the commitment the nations of the world set before themselves and the promise they made to mankind. The targets were to be reached by the year 2015 AD. The Midpoint day is 07-07'07. This reports takes a look at the situation in Tamilnadu as regards the realization of MDGs.

The most striking thing we found was that neither in the state level offices nor the district offices of the government rarely anybody knew anything about the Millennium Development Goals. This makes us wonder whether there has been any concerted and conscious mobilization by our various departments towards achieving the MDG targets. That aside, the report finds the State is in good standing compared to many other states of India as regards focus on various indicators.

But we have still miles to go.

We would need lot more target-and-indicator-linked planning and lot more provisions for participation by people, especially in governance, that together we all achieve the goals and sing our victories.

Of such governance structures the report focuses on neighbourhood-based, small-sized participatory structures and their federations: neighbourhood based self-help groups and their federators at village and panchayat level; neighbourhood sabhas as constituents of village sabhas and panchayat gram sabhas; neighbourhood-based marketing units and their federations at various levels to ensure an alternative marketing chain to motivate more income-generation programmes by the poor; neighbourhood-based health communities to keep monitoring on and motivating for health targets; neighbourhood-based environment action; neighbourhood-based childrens' parliaments etc.

Tamilnadu has represented lot of good initiatives which has yielded good results. We will reach greater heights through such structures of power for people..

Chapter 1: Introduction

This report aims primarily to assess the situation in Tamilnadu, India vis-à-vis Millennium Development Goals.

It is to mark 07-07-'07, the memorable midpoint between the dawn of the third millennium when the goals were propounded and 2015 when the targets are meant to be achieved.

It aims at pointing out the strengths and weaknesses not only the administrative machinery and the agencies which are engaged in the development of the peoples, but also those of the society for whom the goals are set.

The report ventures also to recommend alternatives to help achieve the goals faster and more effectively.

The study limits to Tamilnadu and to the situation as regards Millennium Development Goals as seen at the midpoint for the realization of the goals.

The Report is prepared at a short notice and in a hurry so as not to let the midpoint ie. 07-07-'07, go unnoticed and to make the best of the occasion for trainging consciousness regarding the MDGs.

The biggest problem we found that rarely anybody in the state government and district offices we visited was conversant with the MDGs. Hence they were not ready with uptodate data befitting the occasion of the midpoint mark.

The data and figures given here are were approximate as they were from various sources and representing various periods.

The report was prepared by a team representing Neighbourhood Community Network (NCN), an NGO committed to building structures for participatory governance through neighbourhood *sabhas* (neighbourhood parliaments) and their multitier federations. The organization that has nearly a hundred NGOs in its alliance for neighbourhood parliaments for children and adolescents in Tamilnadu.

NCN consulted various activists and organizations in the related fields to get their assessments and suggestions.

Chapter 2: Policy and Political Context of the Country

The country's resilience is evident in that it has survived the ups and downs of the history of 60 years. The child that was born on its independence day in 1947 is today a senior citizen. With the collective wisdom acquired from lived experience of the nation, India now can bequeath to the coming generation a tradition of democratic values. It is in a legitimate position to give leadership to the nations experimenting with democracy.

The last assembly elections in 2006 have opened a new vista in Tamil Nadu politics. It may create space for new political issues, policies and formations in future. The caste-based and communal-based politics are becoming part of history. Moreover, there seems to be an obvious but critical shift in the State's political geography. This is the net result of the changing political sociology of the State. The major caste groups no more identify themselves with anyone of the major political forces in the State.

There is a remarkable change in the established social equations and geographical patterns of Tamil Nadu politics. The significant turnout of voters figuring 70.22 percent in the last elections to Assembly and also in the local body elections are the reflections of a major social change the voters aspire for.

In 2006, DMK Government was installed as a minority government with the support of Democratic Progressive Alliance, DPA. The parties that form part of the DPA are the constituents of the UPA Government at the Centre.

Chapter 3: Assessment of Country MDGs#1-7 - Progress & Challenges

GOAL 1: ERADICATION OF EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

From Official Sources:

- The government of Tamil Nadu has made significant progress in poverty reduction since 1987-88. In 1973-74 the people living below poverty line was 54.94%. It was then higher than the all-India average. It declined to 43.39 per cent in 1987-88. In 1999-2000, it further declined to 21.12 per cent.
- It was less than the national average of 26 percent.
- Tamil Nadu was already on the half way mark of achieving the target of 10% reduction by 2007, the end of the Tenth Five Year

From Other Sources:

- Percentage of people below poverty line, 21.12, in Tamil Nadu was the largest among the four southern states. It was 15% in Kerala..(The Financial Express dated 10-08-2001)
- The people living below poverty line in Tamil Nadu were 29.16 as against the national average of 41.28%. (The Deccan Chronicle dated 09-09-2001 quoting from the source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question #2688)
- The 21.12% is actually the poverty gap.
- Population living below \$ 1 per day is estimated as 34% in Tamil Nadu.

Says, Mr. Abraham George “The real story is even worse. According to respected economists and statisticians in India, in the year 2000, the monthly income needed for rural individual to consume 2,400 K-calories per day is not Rs. 327 (\$7.25) but Rs. 567 (\$12.60). At this income level, which amounts to \$0.42 or less per day, nearly 75 percent of the rural population is poor. One can only imagine what percentage of the rural population is below the World Bank’s definition of \$2 per day: probably more than 75 percent”

The concerns felt

- Whatever be the claims by the government in terms of percentages and averages, the common man and women who live as agricultural labourers in Tamil Nadu constituting 25% of the rural population, reel under severe poverty.
- The fact that the employment generation is just 1.6% in the last 10 years, which is less than the population growth, proves that the people living below poverty line actually increases every year in terms of numbers.
- Moreover, due to various factors, including mechanization process, the employment in agriculture is getting reduced and at the same time the service sector is unable to absorb those who remain unemployed.
- The State Government needs to have clear and specific programmes for reduction of the number of people below poverty line.

The prevailing scenario:

The social activists present a different picture in contrast to what the government claimed to have achieved. They decry that the following preoccupations that indicate the direction in which the State is being driven to have another side not adequately attended to:

National Highways, Airport Expansion and the SEZ

National Highways, Airport Expansion and the Special Economic Zone, SEZ, in fact do not open up development avenues to the poor and the village folk which constitute the largest population of the Southern most State of India. The unquestionable support to the projects like building of National Highways to link important cities and making transport of goods and people, expansion of Salem, Trichy and Madurai airports and creation of SEZs where the laws differ from a country's typical economic laws in the mainland and the goal is usually an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country .It is apparent that the cause of the poor and poverty stricken mass has no place in these except to participate as unskilled labourers.

The National Highways development programme has resulted in the following adverse factors in the lives of the poor and the landless.

- They are systematically uprooted from their homes and made to migrate to road building sites or to the towns looking for employment opportunities other than what they were accustomed to or skilled in
- The compensation paid to the people displaced is minimal.
- The prices of the land along the construction sites have gone sky high not merely because of the construction of highways, but a number of industries that are mushrooming along the roadways.
- The uprooted people thus find themselves in dire situation where they have neither help nor guidance.
- The land where they laboured for their livelihood has been acquired for the National Highway and hence they are left without livelihood.
- More and more agricultural land is being converted mindlessly and a lot of economic trees along the highways have been uprooted in the name of development.
- The compensation paid to the farmer thus displaced, is at the Government rate. The government buys land from the farmers for constructing National Highway at a price set rather irrationally by its bureaucracy. The price is three to four times lower than the price at which the land is traded in the market.
- Since Government would not give land for land, but only barter the agriculture land for cash, the farmer faces a gigantic dilemma either to meet the daily need with the money that he has or to buy from the landowners at a high price.
- More often than not, he settles for the immediate needs thus he and his family and by extension his village into bitter poverty and hunger in a short time.

Airport expansion programme in the cities of Madurai, Trichy and Salem have the same effect except that the impact is more on the urban or semi-urban poor. However, on the flip side, the programme in these cities has created few employment opportunities for those who had already migrated from villages in search of livelihood. However land prices in cities adjacent to the airports have skyrocketed because of airport expansion, thus making the poor homeless and still more poor and the hungry scavenging all the more for mere survival.

Special Economic Zones are necessary for the Government's intentions to make the country a rich nation. In the calculation of riches, the poor do not count. At best they are an eyesore or thorn in the flesh of the administrators. SEZs as they are called can only be placed in large masses of land. Large area of land en masse can be acquired only in villages. Inevitably and tragically these large land areas are cultivable agricultural land.

Lack of support to Agriculture

Agriculture is already in a pitiable situation thanks to erratic rainfalls, lack of infrastructures, real estate business and financial constraints. With mighty money spinners like the SEZs in the horizon, the low budgetary allocation to agriculture and the lack of agriculture-specific development programmes the agricultural growth is on the decline.

The latest estimate indicates that industrial growth in Tamil Nadu has recorded 9% while agricultural growth is recorded at a mere 2% as against the required growth rate of at least 4%. This is alarming when we consider that 80% of the population of Tamil Nadu lives in villages and by deduction on agriculture.

Migration from village to cities

Migration of population has become a norm since the dawn of 1990s. While a small number migrate as families, larger numbers of migration take place among the able bodied men. The youth especially are drawn to the urban both for its opportunities and promises and for its glamour. This necessarily leaves the village with a population of the women and the less able bodied men and elders. This is a social imbalance resulting in many psychological and social upheavals.

In rare cases, but lately in large numbers the men who occasionally visit their villages also bring HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and many other ailments. They bring to the villages habits of drunkenness and social misbehaviour which were alien to the traditional villages. Drinking is a social phenomenon in rural India; however, drunkenness is an imported social evil. It takes little time before family and health are destroyed.

Below Poverty Line (BPL) list doctored

When introduced the concept of giving a helping hand to the people living Below the Poverty Line was considered a blessing. It was meant to eradicate hunger altogether. However good the aim of the programme is, the programme itself is as

good as its implementation. The fact remains that the benefits of the BPL is yet to reach and permeate the lowest strata of society. The government, instead of listing all those who live below the poverty line in the villages, fixes unequal targets to them listed every year paving the way for corruption and favouritism. Since those get their names in the list obtain certain favours in the welfare schemes of the government, the dominant castes and financially sound people with political background get their names listed, leaving the real poor in the lurch.

People's Participation missing

No schemes for the people will succeed without the participation of the people concerned. Exceptional concepts and dreams for the poor that back the schemes will remain fantastic plans and dreams, as long as the beneficiaries remain apart or aloof from the programme. Much worse is the case when they are mere passive recipients. Up to now what is seen in the welfare schemes of Tamil Nadu is that the Government behaves like benefactors and the poor remain as recipients. The officials behave as if they are the donors and expect the people to be grateful beneficiaries.

Ask the common man about Millennium Development Goals and you are faced with a blank expression. This is not surprising when the authorities themselves are unaware of the MDG.

Funds and the Official Apathy

Year after year at the beginning of the financial year, allocation of funds is made. It is then left to the officials to initiate the bureaucratic procedures to reach the fund to the poor or implement the programmes meant for their development. However, what really takes place is that the official, who in connivance with the local political bosses and brokers, refuses to take the extra step to find the beneficiaries or discourage the beneficiary who comes begging. The official apathy thus defeats every single scheme for the poor.

Unproductive Land Reforms

The Government claims that land reforms have already taken place. The bills are enacted in the assembly. Recently government initiated the process of giving two acres of land to the landless, The measures will not yield results until people made aware of the existence of the reforms, their rights and the process by which they can benefit out of the reforms, and until adequate supportive measures are taken to make the allotted lands, often uncultivable, cultivable..

The Government Gives and the Government takes away

When Mr. Kakkan was a Minister in the State of Tamil Nadu, he was instrumental in the distribution of house sites, houses and milch animals to the dalits in Tanjavur district. The grateful poor dalits named their village after his name as Kakkan Colony. The National Highway programme that passes through this village wants to take away the land for construction of the National Highway. Now the people are moving pillar to post to get alternative sites with houses but in vain.

We need

- **Specific Programmes for Poverty Eradication**

The Government while manipulating the statistics to show that they have achieved progress, points out that loans are made available to people, grants are given, old age pensions distributed, assistance to marriage of children is given to the poor etc.

A little more keen investigation will reveal that all the above programme are of peripheral use and the Government has not proposed any programme specifically for achieving the MDG of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

A loan granted is a small amount. It may or may not result in a successful crop. If it does it just satisfies the farmer for a single season, then it is his turn to refund the money. While that is done, he is left to beg for another loan and the routine goes on. When the crop fails, that year will be a miserable year for the farmer. Small loans are not solution to poverty eradication.

Empowerment of the people

A lot more needs to be done at the grassroots to achieve the political and social empowerment of the people. One sure indicator of the empowerment is restlessness among the people. The people must feel the pinch of injustice and bad governance and rise against it. At present, most poor people will consider the officials are benefactors rather than public servants. They would consider their poverty as god-given fate rather than the result of ignorance on their part and apathy on the part of the government. It is a long way from such political and social empowerment.

A counter example: In West Bengal, for example, the continuous rule of the left Government and by expectation, a poor people friendly government for over thirty years, the farmers were educated about the land reforms and their rights. There the Panchayats are made more powerful and more people oriented administrations. Therefore, when SEZ was to be implemented in Singur in West Bengal, the farmers unitedly opposed the move, ironically of the same government which made them aware of their rights. When the Government acquired farm lands to convert into an industrial estate of the Tata Motors in Nandigram, West Bengal, the people opposed.

It will take a revolution of sorts to make the poor of Tamil Nadu to be a politically conscious and aware people.

Employment Opportunities

The Central Government has been pumping large amount of money into the State of Tamil Nadu for developments of airports and construction of national highways. This has had a beneficial effect on the labour front. Many labour opportunities are created.

Policy Measures Recommended

1. **Employment Provision:** Eradication of extreme poverty is not possible unless the Government ensures *employment for at least one member of every family*. In a competitive world, the marginalized poor are defenceless. Most poor people are also socially weak and have little bargaining power for their labour. Since there are forces in this world ready to exploit the weakness thus inherent in the human labour, there must be some social security for the poor labourer to ensure that his/her daily labour is not wasted but utilised and paid for reasonably by the end of the day.
2. **Encouraging small scale appropriate ventures:** Villages are the living cells in the body of the nation. Every such cell has a right to survive in its own terms. This would mean that the *survival skills traditionally employed by the villages* of India must be allowed to thrive and prosper. We are now talking about village crafts and small scale industries that were developed by century of experimentation should not be allowed to disintegrate in the flurry of massive industrialization. The common man shall never be pitted against large industries and multinationals. He and his village need to be protected against the march of urbanization and colonization by the developers. The government alone is capable of providing this protection so that the common man is ensured of his daily food.
3. **Subsidy, land and irrigation:** There are encouraging signs for the produce from agricultural and fishing sectors. The neighbouring state of Kerala depends upon the adjacent States to meet its ever-growing markets for essential commodities, especially the perishable goods. There is an increasing demand for vegetables, cereals, paddy, milk products, meat and farm products, etc from Kerala. The State government should encourage the landless agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers with subsidies, lands and assured irrigation facilities that would help them venture into producing these commodities in need.
4. **Neighbourhood-based alternative marketing chain:** A step worth mentioning in poverty alleviation in Tamil Nadu is the organization of nearly 192,893 *self help groups* with 3.24 million members¹ as on January 31st 2005 in Tamil Nadu. The self-help groups have helped to reduce to great extent the overdependence on

¹Source: Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department, Policy Note - 2005-06, Demand No. 43, CHAPTER 4, http://www.tn.gov.in/policynotes/social_welfare_4.htm

moneylenders who charge exorbitant rate of interests ranging from 36% to 120%. This was due to mobilization of savings within groups (Rs. 621.92 Crores by SHGs as on 31/01/05), lending within groups and availability of loans (Rs. 1054.10 Crores for various economic activities by 178,251 SHGs) and subsidies from the banks and the government.

But this has had its own serious limitations. One thing, while the loans were made available, there wasn't adequate motivation for income generation measures. The result: The amount often went for consumption purposes especially in relation to special celebrative occasions like marriage. Often these amounts have to be paid back adding additional burden from the inadequate income they used to receive from usual sources. The poverty thus ends up becoming all the more unbearable.

The main reason for the lack of adequate motivation for income generation is the lack of adequate marketing. Various groups went for small scale income generation measures only to flop up due to lack for marketing scope.

An alternative marketing chain needed to be organized in a context where the existing shops were already, so to say bought over by big level and multinational firms.

A very much possible alternative: to reorganize the existing self-help groups into territory-based neighbourhood groups and federate them at the levels of the area (village, panchayat, block and the district) so that they themselves become a people's own massive alternative marketing network where people themselves become owners, getting dividends, sellers getting commissions, buyers getting discounts and workers getting wages.(see www.ncnworld.org)

Low Interest Loans for farmers: Funds and loans must be made available to small farmers at a low rate of interest. This will enable the poor farmers to cultivate the land they have, prevent them from getting themselves caught in the clutches of money lenders.

Crop insurance and Marketing: No one is capable of predicting a bad crop. However, the richer farmers are able to withstand most of the onslaughts of nature. Therefore, crop insurance must be introduced at a practicable premium. In the same manner, the small farmers must be given facilities to reach his produces to the market and ensured that his produce gets the price it deserves.

Building Infrastructure: It is the role of the Government to provide infrastructure for safeguarding the farming sector. Construction of dams for irrigation, of go downs and storage facilities for perishable commodities, uninterrupted power supply and diesel for power to the farmers at subsidized rates etc will ensure the growth of the farming sector.

Strengthening PDS: Public Distribution System has been a life saver for the poor of the country especially those living below the poverty line. PDS must be strengthened in order that the poor have the essential commodities at a nominal price.

Budgetary Allocation for Agricultural Sector: The present strategy of allocating small amount of funds for the agricultural sector is short-sighted way of dealing with the problems of the sector. If agriculture has to improve all out efforts must be made and towards that a larger amount must be allocated.

Displaced Persons: Displacing the citizens is a national shame and highhandedness. In the first place only the poor and the powerless are displaced in the name of development. All displaced persons should be allotted land for their settlement and employment. The education of their children and livelihood for the family should be ensured when in necessity people are displaced from their traditional habitations.

Creating Conducive attitudes: There is need for massive social change. Man's own attitude towards man has to be changed. How does one look at the dalits for example. How does the household treat its women and the girl child in particular? How does the majority community treat the minorities and weaker sections of society? Such attitudinal change has much to do about eliminating extreme poverty. Within a household it is observed that the women and the girl child have less to eat. Awareness building and education will go a long way in eradicating extreme poverty.

People's Cooperation: Development and changes in general imposed on people from about without consultation and participation are bound to fail in one sense or other. Construction, industrialization and other developmental endeavours must be undertaken with the involvement of the people affected by it. When people own up a programme it has always been a success in all its aspects like, planning, execution, monitoring, feedback and the like.

Ensuring Utilization of Allotted Funds: All allotted amount must be utilized fully. The officers concerned must be held responsible for under utilization and non-utilization of funds.

Strengthening Panchayati Raj: Empowering the panchajtiraj system is the best way of local governance. A large monolith like the Government of India or even the State Government of Tamil Nadu can hardly govern and provide the every day needs of the people at the grassroots is nearly impossible. There are more citizens to government interaction and mutual appreciation and help possible at this level. Steps must be taken to institutionalize ongoing participation in governance by the least and the last at grassroots by making small-sized, territorially organized neighbourhood *sabhas as constituent units of gram sabhas* as has been recommended for Kerela by Singh Committee for Panchayat Raj Strengthening.

Bank Loans: In the present system an individual needs to go from pillar to post for a loan from the banks though the banks are required to provide prompt assistance. The amount of loan is invariably small. When a farmer is handed a small amount the temptation is to utilize it for immediate needs of the family. Thus he is unable to utilize it for farming purposes. Thus he falls into debt trap.

GOAL 2: ACHIEVEMENT OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

The statistics reveal that the literacy rate in Tamil Nadu has increased substantially from 62.7 per cent to 73.5 per cent between 1991 and 2001 with improvement across all segments. However, the rural-urban gap and gender gap are still to be bridged. Female literacy has improved from 51.3 per cent to 64.5 per cent and male literacy rates have improved from 73.7 per cent to 82.3 per cent. Rural literacy has improved from 41.8 per cent to 55.8 per cent and urban literacy has improved from 69.6 per cent to 75.6 per cent and this gap between the rural and urban sectors has remained even with each region. These figures are among the highest compared to many large states in India.

The Hindu reports that the literacy levels in Tamil Nadu touched 73.5 per cent as per 2001 figures, the prevalence among rural women was only 55 per cent and the State had been set the target of closing the gap by 2007. (The Hindu dated June 30, 06)

Website of “Help TN” says:

- ☛ The illiteracy rate in Tamil Nadu is 35.06%, and ranks 24th within India.
- ☛ 45.1% is the SC illiteracy rate, and ranks 17th within India.
- ☛ 64.55% is the ST illiteracy rate, and ranks 10th within India.
- ☛ The literacy rate in Tamil Nadu is 64.94%, and ranks 12th within India.
- ☛ The SC literacy rate is 54.9%, and ranks 16th within India.
- ☛ The ST literacy rate is 35.45%, and ranks 21st within India.

(See at: <http://www.helptn.org/default.aspx>)

Some facts.

Children attend schools for the sake of midday meal. This is the case of the children of extremely poor families. Most of them arrive for meals and go away soon after the meal is eaten.

Boys in the coastal areas attend school till they are 10 years of age and thereafter dropout. Their helping hand is needed for the families for fishing.

Literacy achieved by attending 5 classes is of no use unless it is put to use. Non functional literacy becomes non-literacy after a while. A fifteen year old young man might tell the census enumerator that he had studied till class five. The enumerator will list him as literate. However the five years after he left school, he had never used his knowledge of reading and writing and as such he is as good as illiterate.

By these and many other socio-economic factors including family compulsions, the claim of the Government to have achieved 73.47% literacy cannot be accepted as truth.

The following could be stated as causes of illiteracy in the state.

1. Lack of motivation
2. Family compulsions to get the boys to work
3. Inhibitions of the parents to send the girl child to school
4. Lack of infrastructure.
5. Lack of school teachers in villages.
6. Village schools are rare and children have to walk many miles to the nearest school.
7. Extreme poverty
8. The girl children are often made to stay at home to look after the babies and often to take care of the home while the mother is at work.
9. Children are made to supplement family income by working at early age.
10. Many who migrate to cities would not hesitate to encourage child to earn by begging in the streets or rag picking and at times stealing.

GOAL 3 : PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Indian boasts of great women like:

- India's Mrs. Vijaylakshmi Pandit was the first woman President of the UN General Assembly.
- Rani Laxmi Bai's statues adorn at least one street junction of most cities in the Hindi heartland.
- Indira Gandhi held sway over not only Indian political scenario but also was considered a world stateswoman for over two decades.
- Now India is on the verge of installing a woman as President of the Republic on Raisina Hills.

To get the real picture of women, picture also

- a widow of 65 years seen in a village with a body of a 90 year old, seriously hunchbacked, gathering twigs for family's kitchen.

- an elderly woman wading through a muddy slimy cesspool in the back lanes of a factory in order to collect scrap iron.
- young girls in the city dumps searching through the rubble for “raddi” to sell in the market for a pittance. Bereft of her childhood, girlhood and dignity, she wears boys’ clothes because she is street-smart and tough.
- the girl who works as domestic servant in an affluent home for a meagre salary of Rs. 500 per month, leftover for daily food and used sarees of the “mehsahib” for clothing.
- the sex worker who sells her body, dignity and womanhood for survival
- the widows wearing a holy mask over their pitiable condition, making pilgrimages to holy shrines and staying at the feet of the deity for the rest of their lives if only to be assured of one free meal a day and the dharsan of the deity and above all freedom from taunts.
- The girl children are made to work as assistants to their mothers in taking care of the younger children and in doing the household chores. In the process she is deprived of her right to education and deprived of her children

There are several clear indicators of the fact that Indian women continue to be discriminated against: the sex ratio is skewed against them; maternal mortality is the second highest in the world; more than 40 percent women are illiterate; the crimes against women are on the rise.

Recently Karnataka Government brought in an ordinance prohibiting women from working in BPO’s call centres and Hotels after dark. The women folk rose in protest and the ordinance stands cancelled. A close look at the ordinance reveals the fact that no government is willing to educate the men folk and society at large about the honour and dignity and equality of women in society let alone punish him for the crime against his sister, but it can still order the women to take preventive action. Letting men go has always been the policy of the guardians of the Law and Order. R

A couple of years ago a woman of North East had been abducted from Daula Kuan area of New Delhi and raped in a moving van. When the media raised alarm, the authorities especially a particular college issued instructions to the women students from North East to dress properly. It seemed to the principal that it was the dress that the criminals who prey on women were after.

The picture in Tamilnadu

Tamil Nadu Social Development Report 2000 states that in terms of gender related development index GDI India held a lowly 108th rank out of 174 countries surveyed in 1998.

Sex ratio is an indicator for the gender bias that exists. Nature some how balances the genders. However, society steps in to make its own adjustments based on its own prejudicial choices. The sex ratio in the came down from thousand from 1011 women for 1000 men to 986 women for 1000 men between 1951 to 2001.

Thus *female foeticide* is assisted by modern technologies of sex determination of the unborn. Female infanticide is prevalent in the Indian society which prefers the male child.

At the birth of a child, his friends ask the father of the child whether the child is an expenditure or an income? The meaning is: "Is your newborn a boy or a girl?" The We had to approach various departments, research centres, libraries and other data sources to conjure up an approximate assessment implication is that the girl child at her wedding has to be given dowry, while the boy will bring a dowry home.

By Government's on admission 53.3 percent of women in the age bracket of 15 to 49 and married in Tamil Nadu is *anaemic*. The all-India average is only slightly higher at 56.1 percent.

Rural women also work in the field just like men, but they are *paid less* for the same type of work. Pregnant women work even up to the day of delivery. They resume the work soon after delivery. Rural women not only work in the field in addition to taking care of the children at home. They are the most uncared for section of society in Tamil Nadu.

Positive factors

Politically women have received *33 percent reservation* at the panchayat level. That means in the local government or Panchayat, one third of the seat must be occupied by women. Some years, even the presidency of the Panchayat has to pass on to women.

Despite political and economic exploitation, women in Tamil Nadu have made considerable progress socially, economically and politically, thanks to the mushrooming of *self-help groups* and 33 percent reservation. Being economically empowered through self help groups, women play a significant role in the elections. Men are now encouraging women to become members of self help groups. This enables the household to obtain loans from the banks. Men folk encourage women to approach the Government offices to redress their grievances.

Some years ago, when a woman went to the bank seeking loan it was more than possible that the manager would ask her to bring the husband. Even if the husband is drunkard or a drug addict or a loafer, his word and signature was the guarantee the banks accepted. However, noting the regularity and seriousness with which women's self help programmes have achieved economic empowerment, the banks now are liable to ask a man to get the guarantee of a woman.

Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation runs a state-wide programme for the development of women called Mahalir Thittam meaning women's plan. The Thittam has a project office in every district with a staff. They work with NGOs to form, strengthen and train women's groups. They grade the Self Help Groups and recommend them to the banks for loans. They, through block offices assist the women to start income generating projects

The women in the groups are being federated at *Panchayat level federations*. The Mahalir Thittam has given away Rs. 10,000 to each Panchayat Level Federations to enable them to function independently.

The Banks have acknowledged that there has been more than *90 percent recovery* of loans which is to their surprise a record. Banks are generally reluctant to lend loans because such loans are often not returned at all or returned partially.

The self help groups have become a *force to reckon* with especially in times of election times. The candidates of various woo the self help groups of women promising them loans.

Self Help Groups have thrown up *leadership* among women. Some have become forceful and effective leaders in society, that the women have become self confident and self reliant. They do not any more hesitate to approach government officers and demand their rights.

Tamil Nadu is one the first states in India to confer *equal property rights to daughters* along with sons. Government give patta or title for government in the name of both husband and name. This would mean that neither the husband nor the wife can sell or transfer the property.

Areas for improvement

A vast majority of women elected to local governance bodies hand over her leadership to her husband, under pressure from him. Most of the women panchayat presidents are only *namesakes' presidents*. It is their husbands who take official decisions on her behalf. Women's participation in gramma sabha meetings is less and their opinions are not heeded to. In the sitting of Panchayats, the women members are not accorded due respect. Therefore, they do not involve themselves much in the political process except to cast votes.

The other side of the picture of self help groups as regards women's empowerment: it all happens to be a fragmented approach. Since the self-help groups, unlike in the neighbouring state of Kerala, were *not territorially organized as neighbourhood groups*, women did not emerge as consolidated governance power at village and panchayat levels. (Kerala has 175,000 neighbourhood groups federated into Area Development Societies at village and as Community Development Societies at Panchayat level; and the neighbourhood groups of these poor women function within the territory of neighbourhood sabhas.

Here in Tamilnadu half-a-dozen or so of NGOs entered the same village, tried at random to get whomsoever they could from whatever area of the village and haphazardly formed self-help groups of women. Each NGO had a few groups under it in the same village and the women remained divided on the basis of extra-territorial allegiance to various NGOs who competed among themselves.. This meant women do not come together at the village as a united power for common causes as energetically as they would have had they been under one federation. In quite a few villages even the little already existing organized power of the village got weakened on account of the process.

The self-help groups could be starting point for women's empowerment and participation in governance, if they are reorganized territorially as neighbourhood groups and federated at the levels of the village, panchayat, block, district and the state.

GOAL 4: REDUCTION OF CHILD MORTALITY

The future king is the weakest human being in the palace at his birth. A giraffe gives birth standing, the baby falls a clear 6 feet to the ground, gets up and walks and in seven minutes starts running mostly from predators. However, the human baby is to be under the constant care of the mother for many more months. If it does not get the protection it needs, it is in danger of death.

Tamil Nadu can take legitimate pride in the following

- Under 5 mortality rates is only 63 per every 1000 children as compared to 98 per 1000 of the all India average.
- It scores better in gender bias in child mortality. When overall India suffers 107 child deaths in 1000, Tamil Nadu statistics show only 66 baby girls die from every 1000 babies.
- Though the death date of boys less than 5 years in Tamil Nadu is only 58. This difference is smaller compared to the difference between the deaths of boys and girls in the all India level. That is 90 boys versus 107 girls.
- There is a difference of 17 children in the all India level census, while the difference is only 8 in Tamil Nadu. When it comes to the death of children even one child is precious and we need to seek the whys of the case.

- Of 100,000 mothers 134 die giving birth in the State. However the number in this regard at all India level is 301
- Statistically more safe births are conducted in the state than in all India level.
- Statistically less number of mothers dies in the state than in the all India level.
- In the years 2005-06, 96.5% of mothers had at least three antenatal visits to the hospital/clinic for their last birth while during the same period at the all India level only 50.7 percent of mothers availed the same facility.
- 93.2 percent of mothers sought and got the help of skilled health attendants for taking delivery of their last child while only 48.2 percent of her sisters at all India level availed of the same help
- In 2005-06, 90.4 percent of the births took place at recognised institutions. Only 40.7 percent was the average at national level
- Mothers who received postnatal care from skilled health care personnel within 2 days of delivery of the last birth counted 89.6 percent in Tamil Nadu. The same statistics for all India level is an abysmal 36.4 percent
- 55.3 percent of Tamil Nadu children were breastfed within one hour of their birth. The figure for all India level is not even half that number at 23.4 per cent..
- While 33.2 percent of Tamil children fewer than 3 years are found underweight, the overall picture was 45.9 percent of children of the same age bracket were underweight.
- Antenatal care for the mother and delivery taken by skilled health attendants and doctors is another factor that reduces the rate of infant mortality. Tamil Nadu again scores better in the births attended by skilled health attendants..
- Nutrition and Breast feeding is another saving factor when it comes to preventing child mortality. Against the long lasting prejudice against the first breast milk of the mother which is has nature's own preventive and curative contents,.

But

- When census of children between 0 and 5 years exclusively breastfed was taken Tamil Nadu fell far behind the all India level
- While 46.3 percent mothers all over India breastfed their children between the age of 0-5, only 33.3 per cent of Tamil mothers exclusively breastfed their children between the same age
- Weight and Nutrition are major factors in the consideration of infant mortality. The Tamil children between 6-35 months old who were found to be anaemic are as high as 72.5%. The figure for all India for the same age group found anaemic is only slightly higher at 79.1. This is a fact that needs attention.

GOAL 5: IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

As much as woman is neglected and abused and even burnt alive for dowry, the concept of mother takes on a divine dimension in Indian society. This ambiguity of mind and paradox of concepts is seen in the health care that is extended to the woman at the moment her achieving the all important status of mother.

Over a 100,000 women in India continue to die of pregnancy related causes every year. ***The Maternal Mortality Ratio MMR in India*** is 407 per 100,000 live births (SRS, RGI 1998). The major causes of these deaths have been identified as hemorrhage (both ante and post partum), toxemia (Hypertension during pregnancy), anemia, obstructed labor, puerperal sepsis (infections after delivery) and unsafe abortion.

A large number of these causes are preventable through improved maternal care and ensuring appropriate treatment of complications, ideally all the deliveries should be conducted by trained health functionaries, however, presently the health care system is not in a position to provide all pregnant women, services of a trained health functionary at the time of delivery. Therefore there is a need for developing a cadre of Community level skilled birth attendant who will attend to the pregnant women in the community.

The Department of Family Welfare has taken several new initiatives to make the related programmes broad based and client friendly. The focus was, accordingly, shifted from individualized vertical interventions to a more holistic and integrated life cycle approach giving more focused attention to the reproductive health care. The Maternal Health Programme which is a component of the ***Reproductive and Child Health Programme*** aims at reducing maternal mortality to less than 100 by the 2010.

To promote institutional deliveries, provision has been made under the current RCH Programme to give additional honorarium to the staff to encourage round the clock delivery services at PHCs and CHCs. This is to ensure that at least one medical officer, nurse, and cleaner is available beyond normal working hours. Under this scheme Rs.1168.88 lakhs have been released to 21 States based on the proposals received from them.

Time is an important factor for obstetric emergencies. Women who undergo deliveries at home and develop complications often find it difficult to be transported to a referral unit. Under the current RCH Programme Provision has been made to assist women from indigent families in 25% of the sub-centre in selected States to provide a lump sum corpus fund to Panchayat through District Family Welfare Officers. Since 2000-2001, the scheme has been extended to all the States and UTs. Rs.595.65 lakhs have been released 16 States based on the proposals received from them.

Under the RCH Programme flexibility was granted to the four southern States of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Kerala and Punjab. The purpose of the envelope is to provide flexibility to better performing States to design package of

interventions to address problems of Maternal Health Care instead of tying them to national schemes. An amount of Rs.2085.92 lakhs have been released to these six States.

In the field of maternal health care, new initiatives undertaken by the government include:

1 Training of MBBS doctors in Anesthetic Skills for Emergency Obstetric Care at FRUs.

To alleviate shortage of specialist manpower Government of India launched. Training of MBBS doctors for gaining Anaesthetic Skills in Emergency Obstetric Care at FRUs. The 18 weeks training Programme for the first batch has been pilot tested at AIIMS and will soon be disseminated to the States.

2 Obstetric Management Skills

Government of India is also considering introducing training of MBBS doctors in Obstetric Management Skills. Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Society of India has prepared the training for 16 weeks in all obstetric management skills including Caesarian Section operation and is at present under consideration

3 Setting up of Blood Storage Centers (BSC) at FRUs

Timely treatment for complications associated with pregnancy is sometimes hampered due to non-availability of Blood Transfusion services at FRUs to facilitate establishment of Blood Storage Centers at such FRUs the Drugs and Cosmetics Act have been amended and guidelines for these Blood Storage Centers (BSCs), have been prepared and disseminated to the States. Initial funding and equipment will be provided by Government of India under RCH-II.

4 Developing a cadre of Community Level Skilled Birth Attendant

A 'Community Level Skilled Birth Attendant' is a person who will be trained in midwifery to provide maternal care at the community level. She will be selected from the community where she will set up her practice after completion of her training of one year in midwifery. The community level skilled birth attendant will not be a financial or administrative obligation to the health system in any way. They will be left in the villages to practice the skills provided. They will serve in the same community for a minimum period of three years and will not be given government services. They will be given stipend for the training period and hostel facility will be provided at ANM training centres. This scheme will be taken up during Phase II of RCH Programme.

The RCH (Reproductive and Child Health) Project, based on the RCH concept and approach, commenced in 1997 and completed its first phase in 2004.

Tamil Nadu was an outstanding performer in the first phase of the RCH project. Its achievements included the following:

- ❖ A substantial reduction in infant mortality rate, from around 53 infant deaths per 1000 live births in 1997 to 43 by 2003.
- ❖ Maternal deaths have been reduced by 25% during the last four years (2001-2004)
- ❖ A decline in crude birth rate from 19.0 in 1997 to 18.3 in 2003.
- ❖ A significant increase in the number of tubectomies and reduction in the proportion of higher order births (third and above) to total births.
- ❖ A substantial increase in the degree of utilization of primary health centers (PHCs) and health sub centers (HSCs). In terms of significant increase in both the average number of outpatients treated per day per PHC, and the number of deliveries performed in PHCs and HSCs, as well as their shares in total deliveries.
- ❖ Significant increase in percentage of institutional deliveries from 71.6% in 1997 to 94.3% in 2004.
- ❖ An increase in percentage of all deliveries involving skilled attendance at birth from 85% in 1996 to 99.6% in 2004.

Areas that need attention

Women social workers have made a fervent plea to view maternal deaths not as a personal tragedy, but as a major health policy issue. This would call for

- **Adequate statistical data:** It has rightly been said that unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality through most of the developing world constitute 'the scandal of our times.' Unfortunately, in patriarchal societies like ours, maternal death is treated only as a private, personal tragedy. It is not seen as a major health policy issue, so much so that Reliable estimates of maternal mortality ratio (MMR) (defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) are often not available even for large populations.

This state of affairs cannot be dismissed as merely a consequence of a very large sample size being required for estimation of MMR with any reasonable degree of precision.

- **Ensuring Blood Banking:** Around 40 per cent of maternal deaths in the State have been ascribed to *haemorrhage*, both postpartum and ante partum. A key to reduction of MMR therefore lies in reducing maternal deaths due to

haemorrhage. Availability of adequate quantities of blood in time therefore becomes crucial. All the designated first referral units (FRUs) in the state need to be equipped with blood banks

- **Equipping Primary Health Centers** : An important feature of the situation in Tamil Nadu is that secondary and tertiary hospitals get overloaded with normal deliveries, which could in principle be handled easily in PHCs/ HSCs/ Urban Health Post (UHPs). The fact that 75 per cent of all deliveries in teaching hospitals and 79 per cent of those in district headquarters hospitals are normal shows how high this overload is.

Ensuring that PHCs, HSCs, UHPs, and taluk and non-taluk hospitals are more fully utilized to conduct a far greater proportion of all normal deliveries than they presently do will free the human and physical resources of district and teaching hospitals to deal with high risk deliveries.

From an equity point of view, it is very important that the public sector health system responds to the need of the poor for quality services in the case of high risk pregnancies and caesarian deliveries.

In view of the high proportion of institutional deliveries in Tamil Nadu further reduction in MMR will depend crucially on provision of emergency obstetric care. In other words, Tamil Nadu has entered a phase where quality of natal and postnatal care to the poor in primary level medical institutions is crucial to maternal survival.

Similarly, all FRUs need to have obstetric and gynecology specialists, anesthetists and pediatricians, preferably with a special 24 hour emergency obstetric unit.

- **Attacking Anemia:** The reduction of MMR also requires tackling maternal anemia on a priority basis since anemia accounts directly and indirectly for about 12 per cent of all maternal deaths.

Over the years, the state of Tamil Nadu has made good progress in bringing down MMR and improving the chances of maternal survival. The current MMR of 160 in Tamil Nadu compares favourably with most Indian states.

The recent effort to incorporate non-medical causes of maternal death, such as delays in accessing care, delays in transport, delays in treatment on arrival at a medical institution, social factors pertaining to patriarchy and gender inequality, and communication problems, in the protocols for investigation of maternal death, is also a step in the right direction.

The issue of referral also needs to be addressed seriously, both in the sense of ensuring early referral in case of risk and due follow up and feedback thereon, and in the sense of avoiding as far as possible re- referral which carries risks of death in transit.

- **Integrating indigenous therapies:** Policy makers need also to explore the role of traditional and indigenous systems of medicine in preventive, promotive and curative health care during pregnancy and in the postnatal period.
- **Empower grassroots communities:** Government policy interventions alone will not suffice to bring about significant improvements in maternal survival and health. Nor just the concerted efforts on the part of the medical profession. We need an empowered community, and one which squarely tackles the issues of gender as well as social and economic inequality. In addition to medicine of course central, however, the mindset and centuries old socio-religious prejudices stalked against the woman has to be handled from another angle.

GOAL 6: COMBAT HIV/AIDS MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

As per a recent report of National AIDS control Organization NACO Tamil Nadu tops the AIDS list in the country. The report conducted between January 1986 and October 2000 had recorded 7,787 AIDS cases in Tamil Nadu out of 15,606 cases in the country. That is to say nearly 45 percent of the AIDS patients in India live in Tamil Nadu.

The picture becomes all the more ugly when we assess the ground reality. Tamil Nadu AIDS Control Society said in 1998 that “epidemiologists say that for every reported case of AIDS a hundred go unreported.” The basic reason for not reporting a case is the social shame and fear of ostracising by family and community. Even leprosy is tolerated; AIDS is an altogether different matter of shame.

However it is to the credit of the State Government machinery AIDS control project collected 728,972 blood samples and screened them in September 1998. This was the most intensive campaign anywhere in India. The results revealed that 12,278 HIV positive cases lived here of whom 2,123 were found to be full blown cases of AIDS. Up to February 1999 739,776 samples were collected and of them 13,196 persons were found to be AIDS patients. This clearly shows that AIDS is on the increase in the state.

According to National Family Health Survey of 2005-06, 94 percent of women and 97.7 percent of men of Tamil Nadu have heard of HIV/AIDS. However only 42 percent of women knew that consistent use of condom was effective in preventing the disease, while 81.8 percent of men knew of the same information.

This wide gap could mean that the men on their part are not implementing what they knew to be a safeguard. This also points to another important part of conscientization programmes. Most such programmes for educating the masses against HIV/AIDS are aimed at women.

Tamil Nadu has 446 Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres besides 73 centres for prevention of Parent to Child Transmission and 12 Anti-Retroviral Therapy Centres according to another survey.

Development of Highway system is the first where truckers carry the disease at an unimaginable speed. The drivers occasionally visit their families and the sexual relationship with their wives leaves the spouses also infected.

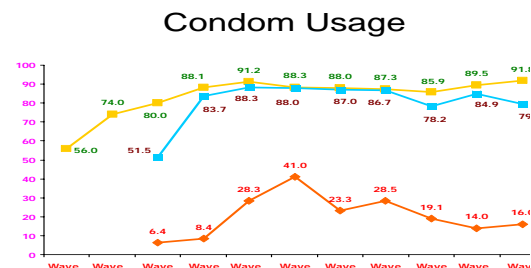
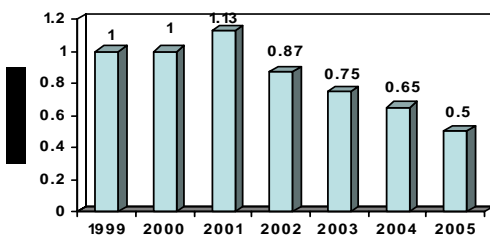
The tourist centres in Tamil Nadu are doing a roaring business. Unknown to the general public, many who visit our centres do not come here merely to look at the scenic panorama. They do demand sex services at hotels and resorts and they are provided either slyly or with the tacit approval of the authorities. This gives an ample avenue for the virus to spread.

Two decades have passed since the six female sex workers found a place in the record books of dubious distinction, the virus spreading far and wide. The juggernaut rolls on and there seems to be no stopping.

A graphic look at the ratio of AIDS persons per 1000 is an alarming 17.8. Just imagine passing through a moderate city railway platform containing a 1000 people at a give time, you are sure to pass by a dozen or more fellow citizens infected by this dreaded disease. Let us see here the other side of the picture too.

In its Concept Note – IFA – Phase III, AIDS Prevention and Control, Chennai, outlines its significant achievements as follows:

- Reduction of HIV prevalence in ANCs in Tamil Nadu from 1.13 percent in 2001 to 0.5 percent in 2005.
- Reduction in Community prevalence of STI from 15 percent in 1998 to 10.6 percent in 2004.
- STI/HIV awareness levels consistently above 90 percent among high-risk populations.
- Improved condom usage among female sex workers from 56 percent in 1996 to 89 percent in 2005.
- Increase in Condom sales from 17 million pieces in 1998 to 55 million pieces in 2006.



Behavior Surveillance Survey -

HIV Prevalence: ANC: Sentinel Surveillance 2005

It further says that these achievements are due to the various initiatives that have created and maintained quality infrastructure and leveraged synergistic partnerships with Government programs. Some of them are:

- A network of 55 NGOs involved in Targeted Interventions have reached more than 27,000 Female Sex Workers, FSWs, and 6,00,000 truckers.
- One of the largest cohorts of voluntary Peer educators in the world (over 16,000) has been created and leveraged for enabling behavior change among high-risk groups.
- Over 12,000 Non - traditional outlets are currently involved in selling condoms in intervention areas.
- More than 4,500 People Living with HIV/AIDS, PLHA, have been reached through community based Care programs in six high prevalence districts.
- Created a cadre of 18,505 trained private and Government sector health care providers for quality Sexually Transmitted Infections, STI, management.
- The first Behavior Surveillance Survey (BSS) and the first assessment of Community prevalence of STI/HIV in the country were both conducted by APAC. Since then, BSS has been repeated every year and is today the only study in the country and perhaps one of the few in the world that have consistently tracked trends in the behavior of high-risk populations over a period of eleven years.
- Behavior Change Communication strategies developed and fine-tuned in the program have been the key driving forces that have resulted in achieving high-levels of awareness and behavior change in the state. These strategies have been widely accepted and adapted by other Prevention programs.
- Participatory monitoring systems and e-enabled MIS developed at APAC have today been adopted by various programs.

Malaria:

“Malaria in Tamil Nadu”, the government says, “has been greatly reduced. However malaria still continues to be one of the major Public health problems in certain pockets of Tamil Nadu”

During 90s, there were 120,029 cases in Tamil Nadu State during 90's, of which 59.6 % were from the urban areas and 40.4% in rural. It normally occurs in the coastal villages of Ramanathapuram, Paramakudi and Nagapattinam and riverside villages of Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri and Tiruvannamalai districts. In 2000, it was brought down to 43,053. However, Malaria is emerging as a problem in Nagerkoil

Out of the total malaria cases reported in the State, 74% are occurring in Chennai City and another 8.4% in Tuticorin, Erode, Vellore, Dindigul, Salem, Tiruchengode, Tiruvallur and Tiruvottriyur. The following problems attribute for the increase of malaria in urban areas.

- ☛ Population migration in search of employment.
- ☛ Lack of adequate water supply leading to storage of water for use, creating breeding source of Malaria vector.
- ☛ Developmental activities especially construction of buildings, over bridges etc.
- ☛ Non closure of wells, cisterns, overhead tanks etc.
- ☛ Inaccessible overhead tanks causing hindrance to the anti-larval work.

GOAL 7: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

National Challenges

An open letter was addressed to 70 organizations and individuals including the Prime Minister of India on March 20, 2007. The letter stressed the need not only to adequately assess impacts on biodiversity but also on the cultures and livelihoods of local people. Secondly, it emphasized the need to involve people in carrying out the impact assessments. These aspects were pointed out to be sorely lacking in India's current and proposed Environmental policy regime.

Some NGO delegates cited a number of examples of how projects impacting local community lands have been cleared without such assessments and participation, or ignoring widespread local protest: the Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project of Tamil Nadu was one of them.

India was one of the most proactive countries in the formulation of the environmental policies for the UN and in pushing for its implementation in the initial years after it came into force. Unfortunately it has lost its leadership role in the last few years; worse, it has started violating its own recommendations. In doing so, it is further endangering its already fast-eroding biodiversity, threatening the future of its uniquely and culturally diverse traditional communities and opening up traditional knowledge to various forms of bio-piracy and misuse.

If India must reverse the trend of the last few years, and before it is too late, it must:

- **Review** and **modify** national laws and policies to bring them more in line with the triple concerns of conservation, sustainable use, and equity; in particular, it must issue notifications to stop destructive projects and enable full citizens' participation, the Biological Diversity Act and Rules to strongly protect traditional knowledge and empower communities, and the Wild Life Act to make

conservation more effective, participatory and respectful of the rights of communities.

- **Maintain** the integrity of protective principles in current legislation that seek to protect farmers and community rights, biodiversity and indigenous knowledge.
- **Finalize** and implement a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan that is true to the spirit and content of the NBSAP draft report submitted to the MoEF in end-2003.
- **Halt** the alarming spread of genetically engineered crops; in particular, safeguard India's position as country of origin of several crops including rice.
- **Develop** and **implement** a legal regime for liability and redress, sensitive especially to the likely socio-economic impact on small farmers and traditional agricultural practices, especially in relation to new technologies.
- **Oppose**, at all international forums, the promotion or acceptance of Genetic Use Restriction Technologies including "terminator", consistent with its domestic position banning such technologies
- **Halt** the opening up of biological resources and people's knowledge to private corporations, which shifts control away from communities and threatens biodiversity with further erosion.
- **Show**, as Chair of the Like Minded Mega diverse Countries (LMMC), greater commitment to community-centred conservation policies, and more openness to the involvement of indigenous/local communities in the operations of this forum.
- **Display** leadership in the South Asian region in the development of such ethics, including through forums like the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- **Respect** India's own constitutional principles mandating a bottom-up, decentralized approach that provides legitimacy to the government to represent the people at international forums.

In Tamilnadu

The geophysical structure of Tamil Nadu is forests, plains, lands, mountains, coasts and deserts.

Environment and Forests Department (Policy Note 2007-2008 and Demand no. 15) says "As per the status of green cover reported to the House in 2006, 17.59% of the geographical area of the State was covered by forests. In addition tree cover in non forest areas accounted for 3.66% of State's area. Thus the total Forest cover and Tree cover in the State was 27634 Sq. Kms, which totals to 21.25% of the geographical area of the State. As per the National Forestry Policy, the forest cover and the tree cover should be 33.33% by 2012. There is therefore a need to increase the green cover substantially".

The per capita availability of land per household is just 2.8 acres and it is 4.5 acres at the national level. The use of fertilizers and pesticides that were introduced in 67 as part of green revolution has degraded the cultivable land causing considerable damage to the land as well as to the health of the people.

The rapid industrialization process that is taking place in Tamil Nadu since the opening of economy for globalization since 91 has reduced the cultivable land still further.

Seventy five percent of the tanneries that exist in Tamilnadu has polluted the land and water surrounding the areas especially in Chrompet in Chennai, Ranipet, Ambur and Vaniyampadi in the banks of the river Palar and Dindugal on the banks of Kudavanaru river.

Disposal of solid wastes has become a major problem for the corporations and municipalities in the state. The garbage that is stored without proper management has polluted the ground water causing diseases to the people.

Chennai being the Malaria capital of India has to dispose of 3100 tons of garbage per day. Similarly all the municipalities and panchayats of Tamil Nadu face the problem of garbage disposal and waste management.

As per government statistics relating to year 2004, out of a total area of 130058 sq kms the forests cover 23023.48 sq kms. However, the construction of four lane roads in the major highways of the state has witnessed large scale uprooting of economic trees such as tamarind, neem etc impacting adversely on the already deteriorating environment.

Suggestions

Disposable garbage can be converted into vermin compost, or turn it into biogas energy. This will at the same time bring additional income to the municipality. The vermin compost that is created can replace the chemical manure used in agriculture.

Tamil Nadu has vast cultivable waste land that can be brought under tree cover, by promoting drip irrigation, water management and horticulture.

Government lands can be used for planting saplings for creating tree cover.

The grass lands that were the grazing area for cattle are lost in Tamil Nadu. They can be reclaimed, enhancing goat and sheep rearing. This will augment the livelihood opportunities of the masses.

Enforce directives for rain harvesting. Since Tamil Nadu is a water scarce land, Government should encourage water management such as rain harvesting villages. In town planning, water harvesting must form part of the structure before they can be approved.

Chapter 4: Assessment of cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting Issues

Core issue: Structures of Power to the Powerless

Core issue, we believe, is to ensure people's ability to control the process of political decision-making and governance.

People are the ultimate stakeholders in development. If people have the power they would ensure that both the legislature and the governance respond to ensure a better future for them. If only the people - the majority of whom are poor - have the power, they will ensure that poverty is eradicated.

Experts agree that poverty could be eradicated in India and that it could have been eradicated long time back. We had the resources. What was missing was the political will. Power-packed will. Those who had power didn't feel the pinch of power and those who felt hunger didn't have power.

Power is the ability to have an effective say. It is to have one's say in such a way that what said matters.

To have one's say, one needs forums. People need forums for talking. People need structures for participation to make them feel that they matter. That their voice counts, that their participation counts.

People don't have at present such structures as would give them an adequate, effective and ongoing say.

These forums have to be accessible to people. They need also to be small in size. The bigger a forum becomes the smaller voices get drowned or go unexpressed.

Hence the need for neighbourhood based small-sized talking forums to institutionalise people's participation in governance

These neighbourhood forums are to be well linked, well-federated at all levels, even up to the world level, that people have their mechanism, institution, to interact with governance powers, other stakeholders in governance, at all levels.

One of the ways we could effectively begin promoting this would be to insist that the self-help groups of savings, credit and the like, that are being organized all over, be made into territory-based neighbourhood groups and then be promoted as neighbourhood units of participatory governance.

The State of Kerala in India has more than 175,000 neighbourhood units organized and federated already up to the third level of federation. The same State had also a movement of planning by people, initiated by the State, where planning began at these well-defined, numerically-organized neighbourhood forums. Such forums were also used for experiments in monitoring by people, auditing by people etc.

Such neighbourhood groups could be situated within neighbourhood *sabhas* (neighbourhood parliaments?). And *Grama Sabhas* should be redefined as the federation of such neighbourhood *sabhas*.. When people have such forums, the Right to Information Act of the government will become all the more effective.

We could also involve in the children in the process by organising children too as children's neighbourhood parliaments and their multi-tier federations at the levels of the village, panchayat, block and the district as is being widely done in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Kerala, has already 35,000 children neighbourhood parliaments federated even up to the state level. They conduct the state level children's parliament in the very legislative assembly hall of the Kerala State. Here and in various parts of the nation, children are being initiated into participatory governance through these leading to their personality growth and promotion of leadership skills.

The various other concerns that represent the MDGs could also find a forum for participatory action from below in these neighbourhood parliaments

Women in these neighbourhood groups can become the women's neighbourhood parliaments and get federated at various levels to become a bargaining force for women's empowerment.

The same way these same neighbourhoods could turn up as neighbourhood environment parliaments with neighbourhood-responsible or neighbourhood ministers for environment. They federated at various levels could again become an effective organised voice at various levels to fight for environmental sustainability.

Again these same neighbourhood groups could also play the role of neighbourhood health communities or neighbourhood health parliaments to ensure community participation in action for integral health.

So too neighbourhoodization of marketing through such neighbourhood forums and their multi-tier federations could be the antidote to the alienation that globalization of marketing creates.

Such possibilities are enormous. (Visit: www.ncnworld.org, www.kudumbashree.org)

When organised power for people gets inclusively institutionalised this way, the people will ensure that promises are kept and that the MDGs are realised in a way that no other approach would.

Concluding Remarks

We would need lot more publicity and mobilization in terms of meetings, discussion, seminars and advocacy efforts to raise the consciousness regarding MDGs. This is to be done both for the government staff as well as for NGOs and the general public.

We need to have structures to keep reminding the various concerned about the MDGs. Here the role of the movements like Wada-Na-Todo assumes importance.

We need especially to have peoples' own effective structures for on going monitoring and say .

Such structures should be such that people at the base – even the last and the least - find them accessible and viable.

Thus this report lays emphasis on small-sized, territory-based neighbourhood structures and their federations at various levels of governance like the ward, panchayat, block and the district.



ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) is a national campaign to hold the government accountable to its promise to end Poverty, Social Exclusion & Discrimination.

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan emerged from the consensus among human rights activists and social action groups who were part of the World Social Forum 2004 (Mumbai) on the need for a forceful, focused and concerted effort to make a difference to the fact that one-fourth of the world's poor live in India, and continue to experience intense deprivation from opportunities to learn, live and work in dignity.

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan aims to do this by monitoring the promises made by the government to meet the objectives set in the UN Millennium Declaration(2000), the National Development Goals and the National Common Minimum Program (2004-09) with a special focus on the Right to Livelihood, Health & Education.

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan works to ensure that the concerns and aspirations of Dalits, Adivasis, Nomadic Tribes, Women, Children, Youth, the Differently Abled and People Living with HIV-AIDS are mainstreamed across programs, policies and development goals of the central and state governments.

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