

# MDG-PROMISES & REALITY IN MAHARASHTRA

## 7-7-7

वाढा ना लोडो अभियान



## CIVIL SOCIETY REPORT

## PREFACE

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**Maharashtra** has always been using extremely good shield of Mumbai's economic clout in India and across Asia to hide its real socioeconomic face.

For a bystander, Mumbai, which headquarters almost all significant business houses, hosts the world famous Bollywood, and is a home to Mumbai Stock Exchange, is truly a city that one can aspire to stay and enjoy. Little does this bystander realize that just a few kilometers outside this *Mumbai-nagari* are tribal villages, which are infamous for their malnutrition deaths. Till the time such bystanders settle in Mumbai, s/he is unaware of the queues that women in various *vasti's* of Mumbai have to stand in, to collect even a bucket of water for their families.

It is important that this unrecognized face of Maharashtra, which is generally known to locals and activists, is brought in open for a debate before citizens of the State and this country, in the context of a framework that has global validity. We thought that the mechanism of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provides us this framework and the date 07-07-07, the perfect opportunity.

The Civil Society Organizations in Maharashtra under the State wide Campaign called "**Wada Na Todo Maha Abhiyan**" and National Campaign called "**Wada Na Todo Abhiyan**" as also on the basis of the agenda set by **United Nation's Millennium Campaign** took this opportunity to bring this analytical report on mid-point of 2000-2015 – Millennium Development Goals.

By no means is "**MDG Promises and Reality in Maharashtra: 7-7-7**" an effort to give Maharashtra a bad image on national and international fora or before prospective and existing investors.

This publication is an effort to make the Administration, political entities, bureaucracy, revisit, various promises they have made to people through instruments such as schemes, policies and legislation. It contains candid evaluation of their efforts by citing views of people and by quoting research, which experts have carried out on various occasions.

**MDG Promises and Reality in Maharashtra: 7-7-7**", is not a lame publication. It comes out with a few, but material suggestions, that echo the thought of people in this State on their own problems. WNT Maha Abhiyan will be following it with the Governance on behalf of and with active support of the stakeholders and citizens of the State.

If this publication does not make you sit up and provoke you to ask questions to the State Administration, bureaucracy, political parties, we believe that it has not served its purpose.

So please make the best use of it in your own campaigns, and in your own efforts as also join WNT Maha Abhiyan to make the State more accountable to its people.

WNT Maha Abhiyan is going to come up with four more such specific research studies in coming months those will give more focus on the Primary Health, Primary Education, Livelihood and Dalit Rights in the framework of MDGs.

This publication would not have been possible without the major efforts of Mr. Raghav Narsalay, renowned economist in Maharashtra, who has authored this. The time support of activists such as Lalit Babar, Sunita Gandhi, Jyoti Nagarkar, Nitin Mate, Milind Babar was great help in this effort. It is only due to the timely efforts put in by these activists that we have been able to interview people in this State. It is needless to say that these activists will be roving ambassadors of this publication which is also going to be published in Marathi.

July 5, 2007

Datta Patil  
Convener, WNT Maha Abhiyan.

## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: INTRODUCTION

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Progressive understanding of evolving developmental challenges by the State and its various institutions is critical for enhancing societal development. Civil society continues to play a strategic role in providing direction and value to this understanding, by analyzing the performance of the State and its various institutions in achieving developmental goals.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), targets and indicators, provide us with multilaterally accepted benchmarks, which can be utilized to verify the performance of the State and its institutions on various developmental issues.

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (Maharashtra) by utilizing the MDG-framework, has made an effort to provide 'an alternative' civil society perspective on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the state of Maharashtra. The aim is to provide a candid picture, as much based on data and statistics, as on the views of civil society, anecdotal evidences and direct inputs from people.

The document so produced is expected to be utilized by civil society, media, academia and most importantly people, to generate a political debate in order to pressurize the Government of Maharashtra to step up its efforts for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

### **Context in which the Issues to be Analyzed are being Identified**

Located in the north centre of Peninsular India, with a command of the Arabian Sea through its port of Mumbai, Maharashtra is one of the most economically prosperous states of India. Mumbai, the principal financial services centre of India, hosting the central bank of the country (viz. Reserve Bank of India) and two major stock exchanges (Mumbai Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange), is the capital of Maharashtra.

While Maharashtra is ranked as one of the most prosperous states in per capita GDP, its debt per capita is also one of the highest in the country. Maharashtra is India's most industrialized state, contributing almost 13% of the national industrial output. But around 50% of the state's gross domestic product is still accounted for by the Mumbai-Thane-Pune industrial belt. The per capita income of Mumbai has remained consistently about 2.5 times higher in comparison to rest of Maharashtra.

The much higher per capita income of Maharashtra cannot mask sharpening intra-regional inequalities with respect to basic issues such as 'health'. Just step a 100 kilometers outside Mumbai and one can encounter several tribal children in Thane's Jawahar taluka dying of starvation. An affidavit filed in the Bombay high court last year claimed that as many as 35,000 children in Melghat in Amravati district were severely malnourished, and more than 5,000 had died in the last decade.

In spite of being categorized amongst the top two industrialized states in India, the problem of unemployment in Maharashtra has slowly started gathering mammoth proportions. Officially, around 5 lakh unemployed individuals are said to be getting added to the existing list of unemployed individuals in Maharashtra every year.

Even though Maharashtra hosts some of the biggest international schools, best technology and research institutes, largest universities, analysis carried out shows that distribution of education in Maharashtra is extremely skewed. Distressingly, the inequality in the spread of education is much higher among females than males, in both rural and urban areas.

Maharashtra has one of the highest numbers of statutory bodies working on economic upliftment of Dalit communities with a larger aim towards ensuring a dignified living for them. Unfortunately, a large number of such bodies have become breeding grounds of corruption, political theatres to appease vested interests and have consistently lacked political will and vision thereby not being able to achieve their larger goals.

In light of such widening developmental gaps as well as deficits and exacerbating inequities amongst regions, social groupings, across the State, on basic issues of health, education, employment and dignity, the intent and content of policymaking needs to be critical scrutinized and questioned.

As mentioned above, the MDG-mechanism consisting of goals, targets and indicators, provide us with the framework to provide a wider visibility to these issues. It is in this context that the larger issues of poverty, education, health, dignity (specifically in the context of Dalit communities and women) and livelihood have been studied on the axes of MDG, goals, targets and indicators.

## **Methodology**

The MDG goals and targets have been categorized based on their relevance to study the larger issues of poverty, education, health, dignity and employment/livelihoods.

The following are the details with respect to the categorization carried out:

### Poverty

*Goal-1: Eradicate extremely poverty and hunger*

*Target-1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$ 1/ day*

*Target-2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger*

### Education

*Goal-2: Achieving universal primary education*

*Target-3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.*

### Health

*Goal-4: Reduce child mortality*

*Target-5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate; and*

*Goal-5: Improve maternal health*

*Target-6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio*

*Goal-6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*

*Target-7: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*

*Target-8: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.*

### Dignity

*Goal-3: Promote gender equality and empower women*

*Target-4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015*

Livelihoods

*Goal-7: Ensure environmental sustainability*

*Target-9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources*

*Target-10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation*

A detailed secondary literature survey covering, relevant government reports, critical analysis published in reputed publications, dailies and weeklies has been utilized to analyze the intent, policies in place and performance of the government on various goals and targets laid out within the MDG framework. This analysis has been adequately complemented by interviews. Some of the interviews have been incorporated in respective chapters.

Interviews have been conducted by ensuring geographical diversity and gender balance. Individuals identified for interviews have been chosen randomly in the regions identified. The views expressed by these individuals are therefore not representative given that the same are not based on a detailed sample survey. At the same time, such views cannot be discounted, as they echo certain common elements of a broader set of concerns in the context of each goal and target.

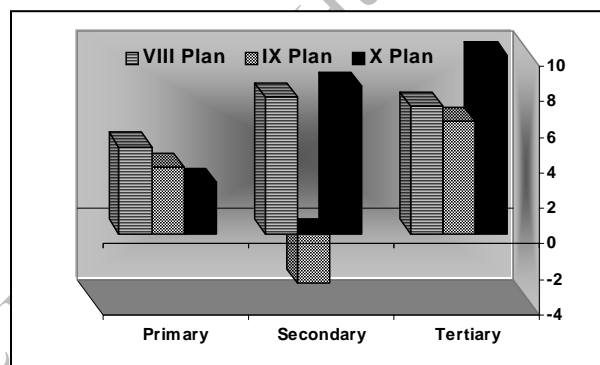
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## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: WIDENING DISPARITIES IN MAHARASHTRA

### Poverty in Maharashtra

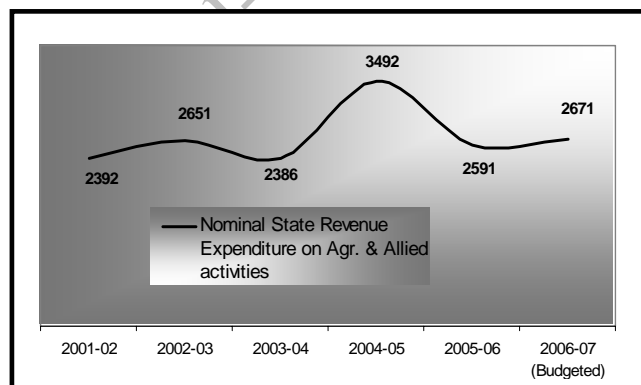
Maharashtra's gross state domestic product during 2006-07 is expected to grow at a rate of 9.3% over 2005-06. It is a proven fact that Maharashtra's growth trajectory aids in defining the growth path of India. Around 13% of India's industrial produce and more than quarter of India's tertiary activities get generated in this State.

Unfortunately, not all sectors in the State are contributing or benefiting from this growth. The mapping of data across the last VIII<sup>th</sup> to X<sup>th</sup> plan shows that the sectoral growth rate of the **agriculture sector** has only experienced deterioration since the end of the VIII<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. The Economic Survey for the year 2006-07 notes that the contribution of primary sector (agriculture + forestry & logging + fishing + mining & quarrying) to state domestic product has declined from 31% in 1960-61 to 13.2% during 2005-06, whereas the fall in the labour force dependent on primary activities for its subsistence is not commensurate. At present, around 55% of the labour force in Maharashtra depends on agriculture for subsistence.



The 2001-Census data shows that 28.7% and 26.3% of the total workforce (amounting to 41,173,000) in Maharashtra are cultivators and farm labour, respectively. Other than cultivators and farm labour, there are another 723,000 people who are directly linked to agricultural activities in the primary sector, as per the industrial categorywise classification of workers of the NSSO.

This implies that there are approximately 23.37 million people in Maharashtra (i.e. approximately 23.7% of Maharashtra's population) who accounted for Rs. 494,720 million during 2005-06 (contribution of agriculture to state gross domestic product [SGDP]). Hence, the per capita SGDP of cultivators, agricultural labour and others directly linked with agriculture during 2005-06 was Rs. 21,171 per annum or Rs. 58 per day. *This barely scraped the target of US\$ 1 per day<sup>1</sup> laid under the Goal-1 of the MDG.* On the other hand, 10.12 million (i.e. approximately 10.4% of Maharashtra's population) people employed in the tertiary sector accounted for Rs. 2,579,420 million during the same year. Hence their per capita SGDP was Rs. 254,833 per annum or Rs. 698 per day (12 times higher than the per-day per capita GSDP of the people directly linked to the agricultural sector).



Unfortunately this chasm of income disparity is growing over the last decade and the State authorities and no concrete measures to improve per capita incomes in the agriculture sector are being taken. In fact one finds that the government is slowly withdrawing itself from this sector, in spite of agriculture being a 'State Subject' under the Indian constitution. This is clearly evident from the fluctuations and abysmally low 'real growth' (nominal expenditure deflated by inflation) in revenue expenditure incurred by the State Administration under the heading of 'Economic Services' on 'agriculture and allied activities' and 'rural development'.

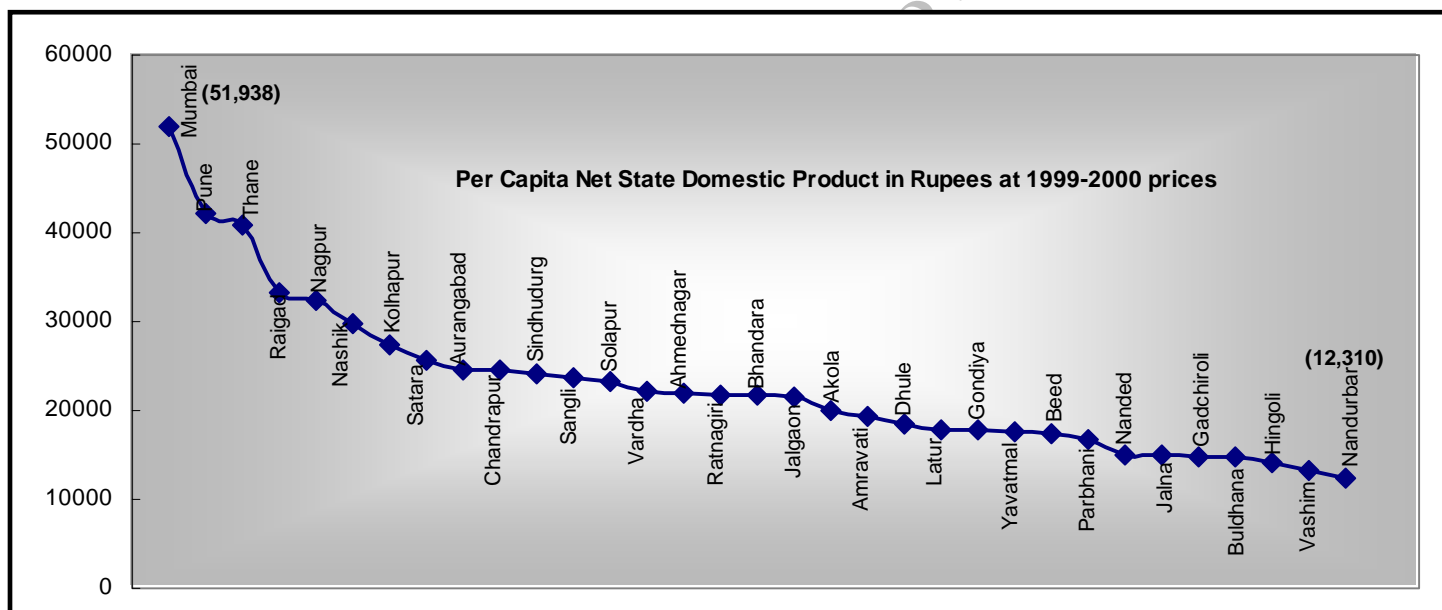
<sup>1</sup> 1USD was approximately worth Rs. 45 during 2005-06. Hence the per capita income on a daily basis translates to US\$ 1.28 per day during 2005-06. This exchange rate has been utilized throughout the document

## Inter-Region inequalities in income

While income inequality continues to strengthen *the problem of regional inequality shows signs of becoming a chronic problem for the State.*

Shaban (2006)<sup>2</sup> by analyzing the growth and distribution of sectoral and aggregate incomes in the 10-year period 1993-94 to 2002-03 finds that notwithstanding high economic development, “Maharashtra suffers from acute regional inequality.” According to this research and also based on the latest data available, one can say the following:

1. Konkan region, (comprising the districts of Greater Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri) accounting for only 25% of Maharashtra’s population accounts for more than half of the total income of the State;
2. Greater Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Nagpur account for about one-half of the total state income, and about 60% of tertiary sector income;
3. Investments made in Greater Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Nagpur are not having a trickle-down effect.



The above graph for the year 2005-06 shows that Mumbai’s per capita net state domestic produce during 2005-06 was 4.21 times that of Nandurbar.

With a per capita net state domestic product of Rs. 32,482 per annum (which translates into Rs. 88 per day) Nagpur was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in terms of per capita in rupees for the year 2005-06. But these numbers do not mean anything for Manik Domaji Dhamake, a farmer who had to surrender his four acre farm in 1992 for a miniscule compensation of Rs. 10,000 per acre provided by the Government. According to him outsiders have now become permanent in his village, and his villagers have had to migrate in search of employment after surrendering their land for the industrial projects. He cannot find a job in the industries surrounding his village as he does not possess the skill set and lacks the negotiating power to even earn a decent wage on a daily basis. He has had to discontinue the education of his son as he was left with no money after a point of time. His son now operates a small shop which sells very small value items (such as peppermints, gutka etc.) Manik and his son, now have to live with a income of less than Rs. 20,000 a year.

<sup>2</sup> Shaban, Abdul (2006); “Regional Structures, Growth and Convergence of Income in Maharashtra”; Economic and Political Weekly”; May 06; Pgs. 1803 – 1815

In the case of Gajanan Dhoke who was a small farmer from the same region, the case is slightly different. Even though he too had to surrender his land, he was willing to work as a labour in the factories surrounding his village, as he had a mindset of working as farm-labour on farms of other farmers since beginning. According to him, this was the main reason why he was not pushed into migrating from his village in search of other work. He is working in a company for the last 12 years but has not been made permanent. The company pays him daily wages and provides him with no facilities that are provided to other permanent employees. He tearfully recollected how the security guards had fired on his friends when they had resisted such a system and had gheraoed the factory. According to him the visits of labour officers to the factory have not resulted in any positive outcomes for workers and therefore he believes that these officers are corrupt and have hand-in-glove relationship with the owners of the factory. He feels sad that due to his inability to educate his children properly they too are not in a position to get permanent jobs in companies and have been transformed into daily wages labour.

### **Intra-region income inequality**

Interestingly, Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri, which are a part of the Konkan region (a region accounting for more than half of State's income), have a per capita income that is less by twice of what is earned in Mumbai. *This clearly shows that not only is there inter-regional disparity of incomes, but also a high level of intra-region income disparity.* With the increasing concentration of tertiary sector in Mumbai, coupled with imbalance and unplanned industrialization as well reducing agricultural productivity, in other parts of Konkan region, this intra-regional disparity is expected to accentuate.

With such sharpening income and regional inequalities, coupled with absence of a strategic programme to reduce such inequalities, *the State will not be in a position to achieve its target of poverty reduction for the X<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (the target is to make around 8 million people come above the poverty line by the end of 2006-07 and reduce the poverty levels to 16.2% by the end of the X<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan period).* In 1983, the percentage of population of below poverty line was around 40% for Maharashtra. By 1999-2000, Maharashtra was able to reduce the percentage of people below poverty line to 25%. The number of people below poverty line in Maharashtra reduced to 23 million during 1999-2000 (Tenth Five-Year Plan 2002-2007, Volume III)<sup>3</sup>.

### **Employment Opportunities and Poverty Lines**

Speak to Vithoba Sakharam Karate and he will tell you how incomes that even cross the poverty line figures do not mean anything for a family due to lack of employment opportunities throughout a substantive part of the year. Vithoba and his two sons, Ashok and Bhavdya earn Rs. 50 each day per person, by working on a farm near Nasik. The wives of Ashok and Bhavdya work on a grape farm and earn Rs. 35 each per day. Ashok and Bhavdya have two children each, out of which two go to school and two are too young to be admitted in a school. Out of 365 days in a year, the maximum number of days they find work is 192 each for three men and 100 days each for two women.

According to them the family of 9 spends approximately Rs. 30 each day on each adult for their meals and approximately Rs. 15 on children. Hence when all the members of the family are earning (say for approximately three months in a year from March to May, they are in a position to afford a nutritious meal consisting of bhakri, bhaji, rice and dal. Interestingly Vithoba also mentions that the prices of vegetables, rice and tur dal which they consume also rise during the months of March to May and therefore they have to spend more on their meals during the months of March, April and May. In the rainy season when there is practically no work, the family prefers eating only rice and dal as they cannot afford to eat a wholesome meal. The meagre savings which the family is able to make during the busy months comes handy to spend on the education of their children and on the basic meal they consume.

<sup>3</sup> Government of India (2002); Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007; Volume III, State Plans: Trends, Concerns and Strategies, Planning Commission, New Delhi

## Employment Schemes and Nutritional Security

According to Kamdar and Basak (2005)<sup>4</sup>, Maharashtra has not fared well on the nutrition front. In rural areas 57.4% of households and 54.8% in urban areas consume less than the standard 2700 calories per day. Low level of food intake affects the nutritional status of women and children.

Research shows that the Employment Guarantee Scheme legislated in Maharashtra has had positive impact in reducing nutritional insecurity in rural Maharashtra. Food security in this context means a household's permanent access to food in sufficient quantity and quality for an active and healthy life. According to Dev<sup>5</sup>, EGS has helped in combating seasonal malnutrition among poor households by providing employment in off-season or in the drought years. EGS has also reduced income variability risks. There is no direct evidence regarding the effect of EGS on intra-household inequalities in food security.

These findings are important especially when EGS is compared to the 'Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojana (SGRY)' which aims to provide additional employment to improve food and nutritional security of poor. According to Savale (2006)<sup>6</sup>, the SGRY works on the principle of decentralization, where people's representatives are involved in planning and execution. He argues that in SGRY it is the dominant groups in the village that take decision regarding the distribution of resources, whereas under the EGS, poor can demand employment whenever they need it, thereby making the latter superior over SGRY.

Be that as it may, even a scheme as effective as EGS has been subjected to rampant misuse by political entities with a tacit blessing of successive administrations. Witness the ways and means adopted by the State Administration to suppress the investigation carried out by the Collector of Solapur Ms. Manisha Varma who decided to expose the fraudulent practices being adopted by officials and political entities while implementing the scheme thereby jeopardizing the benefits of nutritional security flowing from this scheme, to its largest beneficiaries, who happen to be women.

## In Conclusion

Consistent and growing disparity of incomes across sectors, as well as growing inter-regional and intra-regional inequalities, is sedimenting poverty within sectors such a 'agriculture and allied activities' very strongly. Unfortunately, the government does not seem to be interested in taking concerted efforts to resolve this growing sectoral concentration of poverty in the area of agriculture, in spite of the latter being a 'State subject' under the Constitution.

Successive governments have dominantly viewed solutions to reduce poverty from the lens of income generation through employment generation programmes and not from the lens of skill-creation or skill upgradation or farm revival. By doing so, they have ensured the supply of cheap farm labour to growing industrial agriculturists', while parallelly denying an opportunity to cultivators and farm labourers for migrating into skill-intensive sectors such as services and manufacturing that are more rewarding. Growth of the State driven by growth of the tertiary sector therefore has eluded these cultivators and farm labour.

Maharashtra's progress on nutritional security is dismal, which is evident from the data cited above. Sadly, schemes such as EGS, which have shown good results in reducing nutritional insecurity, have become sites of corruption.

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<sup>4</sup> Kamdar, S. & Basak, A. (2005); "Beyond the Human Development Index: Preliminary Notes on Deprivation and Inequity"; Economic and Political Weekly; August 20; Pgs. 3759 – 3765

<sup>5</sup> Dev, M; "India's (Maharashtra) Employment Guarantee Scheme: Lessons from Long Experience"; This paper can be downloaded from: <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/books/vonBraun95/vonBraun95ch05.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Views of Savale have been read from the paper written by Patel S. (2006); "Empowerment, Cooption and Domination: Politics of Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme"; Economic & Political Weekly; December 16, Pgs: 5126 – 5132

Lastly, it is important to accept that income of US\$ 1 per capita or slightly more may not be able to provide the necessary nutritional security to migratory poor individuals/families, who are hit hardest by local inflationary realities.

### **Suggestions**

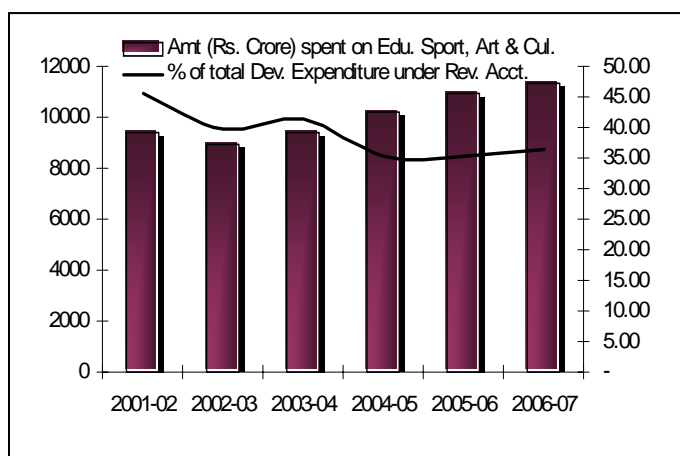
1. EGS must now be utilized to resuscitate the farm sector in Maharashtra. A farmer and his family must be paid his daily basket of EGS-wage and food, for not more than 180 days a year, but continuously for a span two years only, thereby incentivizing such families to make their farms more productive in a time bound manner. Details of such scheme can be worked out in order to ensure their effectiveness. Needless to say that such a scheme will reduce migration, will provide children in the family to get educated in one place, and most importantly provide the farmer and his family a dignified livelihood.
2. It will be interesting to evaluate whether individuals who have successfully breached the US\$ 1 per day income standard have been able to consistently do so at least for a span of two continuous years from the time of breaching this poverty line. Sadly, no such panel data is available – thanks to the growing migratory nature of income generation in the State. The State Planning Commission can initiate a process for collection of such data.

Goal-1: Eradicating Extreme Poverty Hunger

## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: EDUCATION IN MAHARASHTRA

With a literacy rate of 77.6% (recorded in the National Family Health Survey-2005-06), Maharashtra is perceived as one of the more advanced states in the field of education. In a statewide survey carried out in 2006, an estimated 81.9% of the population aged 7 and above were found to be literate<sup>1</sup>.

Under the heading of 'Development Expenditure', the State of Maharashtra has been consistently spending amounts in excess of Rs. 8,000 crore, each year, for the last six years.



Interestingly, the amount being spent on education in the State as a percentage of development expenditure on the revenue account has experienced a reduction during the period 2001-02 to 2005-06, before increasing slightly during the last year.

Be that as it may, one cannot mask the fact that the field of education has been highly politicized for decades leading to severe backwardness and poverty within regions of Maharashtra.

A glaring example in this regard is the ways in which recommendations of Development Boards to be implemented vide Governors Decisions have been shown the dustbin.

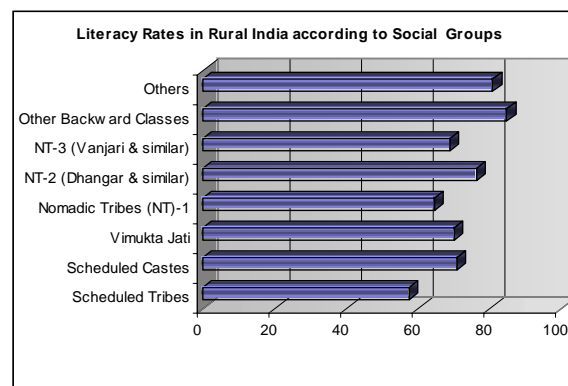
Under Article 371 (2) of the Constitution of India, separate Development Boards (Boards) for Vidarbha, Marathwada and the Rest of Maharashtra were constituted on April 30, 1994. The Governor, on the recommendations of the Boards and subject to the requirements of the State as a whole, directed the Government to allocate funds equitably for developmental expenditure over the areas of Development Board.

*The CAG Civil Audit Report for the year ending March 31, 2006 (Pg. 31) shows that not a single penny was allocated in the budget nor was spent on general education in Marathwada and Vidarbha, in spite of allocative orders of the Governor to spend Rs. 12.66 crore and Rs. 13.58 crore respectively.* Out of the Rs. 93.44 crore allocated by the Governor to Vidarbha for technical education, only Rs. 10.34 crore have been allocated and spent. In case of Marathwada only Rs. 9.28 crore, out of the amount of Rs. 65.02 crore, has been allocated and spent for technical education.

### Distributive injustice and "Education Poverty" in Maharashtra

It is therefore not surprising to see disturbing disparities in educational attainment of the population based on regional, gender and caste inequalities. According to Paranjpe (2007)<sup>2</sup>:

1. the distribution of education is extremely skewed, particularly in the rural regions and specially, among the socially backward sections;



<sup>1</sup> Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2006-07, Pg. 269

<sup>2</sup> Paranjpe, M. (2007); "Uneven Distribution of Education in Maharashtra: Rural-Urban, Gender and Caste Inequalities"; January 20; Pgs. 213 – 216

2. the inequality in spread of education as measured by Gini index is much higher among females than males in both, rural and urban regions;
3. the caste-based inequality is more pronounced in rural areas; and
4. rural females show the highest disparity in educational attainment.

### **Case Study of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan<sup>3</sup>**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), a centrally sponsored scheme, was launched in January 2001 with the primary objective of universalisation of elementary education for all children in the age group six to 14 years by 2010, with the active participation of the community.

*The case study of SSA has been chosen as it is designed to subsume all other major educational interventions by the Government.* All existing schemes of elementary education of the Central Government are to converge with SSA from April 2002. In Maharashtra, the programme was introduced from January 2002.

The Project Approval Board (PAB) approved a total outlay of Rs 2,155.87 crore during the years 2001-2005. The MPSP, however, received only Rs 911.37 crore (42 per cent) from Central and State Governments. Thus, there was an overall shortfall of Rs 1,244.50 crore in release of funds during 2001-2005. Of

SSA stipulated provision of drinking water, toilets for boys and girls, boundary wall, play ground and black board etc., in the schools. It was, however, observed that a large number of schools did not have the basic facilities.

Poor infrastructure facilities in the schools adversely impacted the enrolment, retention and also quality of education to children. Beneficiary survey by Social and Rural Research Institute (SRI) disclosed that about 3.4% of primary schools, 3.5% of upper primary schools and 5.2% of high schools with upper primary sections were operating in *kuccha* structures, which are basically not structurally stable and hence not suitable for running an institution like a school. In 25.3% of primary schools, 12.6% of upper primary schools and 12.5% of high schools with upper primary sections, the structures were *semi-Pucca*. Interestingly, 0.4% of primary schools and 0.9% of upper primary schools did not have any building at all.

### **People's Views**

The following are views of parents and students on the quality of education being imparted in schools and on the educational infrastructure being made available to students.

1. Name of the Parent: Kartik Mahadeo Meshram

Village: Shirasghat Taluka & District: Bhandara

He has four daughters and they go to the Primary School under the auspices of Zilla Parishad. He believes that education will enlighten his daughters and will impart them with knowledge that will make them aware about their rights. He believes that name of the government school is immaterial if it is in a position to impart qualitative education.

He complains that the Gram Shikshan Samiti which runs the administration of the school wherein his daughter is admitted is not efficient and can be easily politicized. The frequent politicization has compelled him to rethink about his daughter's future in this school.

He gave an example to prove his complaint: His daughter had topped the Science Competition in the entire Zilla. But she was not allowed to represent the district on the grounds that she is not eloquent and will not be in a position to speak.

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<sup>3</sup> Information drawn from the CAG Report for the year ending March 31, 2006

His major grouse is that in spite of good salaries being offered to teachers, the school is not in a position to find teachers that can be sustained in the school. Hence at times students are left without a teacher for a month. He finds that the facilities such as the laboratories are not properly utilized in order to benefit the students.

Suggestions: To ensure the proper functioning of the school, the Gram Shikshan Samiti needs to regularly review the functioning of the school and make necessary suggestions to the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti. He wants the real needy and not anybody to benefit from the schemes being implemented by the State for the upliftment of the masses.

2. Name of the Parent: Radhika Ghanashyam Bhure

Village: Ganeshpur; Taluka & District: Bhandara

She has a son and daughter who study at the Zilla Parishad High School at Ganeshpur. She is quite happy with the efforts being taken by teachers to teach her children. According to her teachers are regular in their attendance at the school. The information required to be known by the students is displayed properly.

Unfortunately, the school does not have a laboratory, does not have sports equipments. She finds that the teachers do not take into consideration the suggestions made by the Gram Shikshan Samiti.

Suggestion: Schools should impart practical training to their students rather than only exposing them only to bookish knowledge. Parents –teachers meeting are currently conducted only once. The frequency of such a meeting must be increased and they should be held every quarter. The Panchayat Samiti must recommend to the Zilla Parishad about opening of semi-English divisions after satisfying all nr

3. Name of the Parent: Nisha Dattaram Bansod

Village: Ganeshpur; Taluka & District: Bhandara

She has one son and a daughter. One of her daughter's studies in Jakatdar School whereas her second daughter studies at the Gandhi High School being run by the Nagar Parishad. She is very much convinced about the contribution, education can make in terms of ensuring a bright future for her daughters.

She is happy with the quality of education being imparted to her daughters in both the schools. According to her, the school has a good laboratory which the students are allowed to use. The quality of other school infrastructures such as benches, blackboard is also good. She believes that her daughters are secure in the schools they study and that these schools will ensure a good future for her daughters.

She has not heard about any schemes which her daughters can take advantage of.

Suggestions: According to her the schools besides imparting "bookish" knowledge need to impart some lessons to students on dealing with practical situations.

4. Name of the Student: Nikita Dhoke

Village: Bid Ganeshpur; Taluka: Hingna District: Nagpur

Nikita Dhoke studies in the Zilla Parishad High School and is in fifth standard. She wants to become a doctor. At present their schools do not have a library and computers. For students studying kindergarten to standard six, only mattresses are provided to sit. Tables and chairs are provided to

students only after they reach standard seven. At times the school organizes classes for any standard in the nearby temple without providing notice or reason for doing the same.

Teachers are both males and females. They come to school regularly but at times give class work to students and go out and chit chat amongst themselves. Importantly, when the teacher is not present, especially in the case of primary divisions, the students are asked to go home. Even in these circumstances the Principal of the School does not teach.

The following are some of the major issues which students face in this school:

1. The school does not have a peon or an employee who is in charge of cleaning the classrooms. Hence the students end up cleaning their classrooms.
2. Some of the teachers in the school ask students to wash their lunch boxes after these teachers consume lunch in the school.
3. Teachers many times compel students to make tea and ask them to wash their cups.
4. Students are made to clean the school once the village functions organized in the school are over.
5. During the rainy season, the class room becomes wet and so do the students due to bad windows and ventilation.

Suggestions: School must have a clean toilet, clean drinking water facilities, fans, a playground, a garden and a gate. The toilets for girls must have a roof and a proper door which can be locked from inside. The teacher must be considerate and must not take unnecessarily stern actions against erring students. They must be in a position to explain the subject to students properly.

5. Name of the Student: Laxmi Raju Chavare

Location: Shantinagar; Nagpur city; District: Nagpur

Laxmi is a student of Shantinagar Higher Primary School located at Shantinagar in Nagpur city.

She is very perturbed about the state of toilets in her school. Given that her home is near the school she generally visits her home for the purpose of urination. She feels sorry for her friends who have to go to the back of the school in order to urinate.

The blackboard in her class is visible to her and her friends and she believes that the benches are also in good condition. The school has a big playground and students are allowed to play the games they want on this playground. Unfortunately during rains the playground is filled with muck and wet mud.

The drinking water facility in the school is in the form of a drum which is filled with water and kept outside.

Even though she grades her class teacher as a good teacher, she finds that many times her teacher in spite of being in school does not come and teach the class. According to her, the teacher has not taught the class the course in English which she is supposed to teach them and has only taught music.

### **In Conclusion**

Although the literacy rate being recorded by Maharashtra may be high in comparison to most states in India, one cannot deny the fact that there exists “education poverty”<sup>4</sup> in many districts in the state. Unfortunately, socially backward groupings are getting exposed to this phenomenon of “education poverty”. If the issue of

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<sup>4</sup> A term coined by Jandhyala Tilak (leading researcher on macro education issues)

“education poverty” within socially backward groupings is not addressed, the services revolution in the state that demands basic levels of literacy to be a part of it, will bypass socially backward communities. Such communities will therefore continue to be a part of the neglected agricultural sector and will be exposed to income standards that will be much lower than average per capita income standards of the State.

Maharashtra indeed stands tall on the number of programmes it runs to increase literacy in the state. But there is very little attention paid and very few reviews conducted to enhance the efficiency and productivity of the programmes. The CAG review of SSA clearly shows this deficiency.

This deficiency is also reflected in the interviews, wherein parents seem to be happy with the institution but are not generally happy with the way in which reviews of educational institutions are undertaken in order to improve the performance of the institution.

Students on the other hand, seem to have a lot more grouses about the amenities (especially toilets and drinking water) being provided at the school. It is indeed very shameful that we are not being able to provide these basic amenities to our students in spite of being one of the most prosperous states in India.

### **Suggestion**

1. Very focused education initiatives need to be undertaken for socially backward groupings, especially women in these communities to help them participate in the services sector. For example, the State can work out a programme with the Life Insurance Corporation wherein women from socially backward communities are provided with a focused training programme on reaching out to farmer families with insurance schemes. There will be twin benefits arising from such a programme. The women will start earning income and farmers will get insured.

## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: IS MAHARASHTRA AN OVERALL HEALTHY STATE?

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Rapid urbanization, growing migration and changing tastes and preferences have imparted a strong sociocultural dimension to Maharashtra's health scenario. By 2001, the density of population in Maharashtra doubled as compared to 1960-61.<sup>1</sup> Migration to urban areas from other States and from within Maharashtra has left its impact on fertility, since those from backward regions have also shown a tendency to bring in their social norms with them. According to the Human Development Report on Maharashtra (2002), Maharashtra was expected to benefit "from a combination of industrialisation, higher income levels and history of social reform focused on woman's uplift and empowerment. The hypothesis was that it would leave its distinct positive imprint on population trends that urban values and compulsions would bring about a favourable inclination towards smaller families. Despite 42.4 per cent of the population living in towns and cities, both growing in numbers, size and population densities, *this did not happen.*"<sup>2</sup> The glaring proof of such a phenomenon is the declining sex ratio in the population. From a figure of 946 (as per the National Census 1991) the sex ratio has dropped down to 922 as reported in the National Census 2001.

### Health Budget of Maharashtra

The health budget of Maharashtra was drastically pruned sharply during the decade of the nineties. Health expenditure in Maharashtra fell from 1% of gross state domestic product in the 1980s to 0.52% by the end of 2005-06. As a proportion of total government spending it dropped from 6% during the 1980s to 3.03% by the end of 2005-06. This sudden shrinking has translated into greater costs to be incurred, especially by the poor to take care of their health. No wonder, between 2004 and 2005, the State Administration was able to add only 2 additional primary health care centres (PHC) in the State and the beds per lakh of population in fact reduced from 93 in 2004 to 92 in 2005<sup>3</sup>.

It is therefore not surprising to hear the complaints from Laxmi and Mahadeo Valavte who reside at Gulavne village located in Chiplun Taluka of district Ratnagiri. The PHC is at a distance of 12 km from village Gulavne. The PHC does not contain medication that is required for ordinary insect bites, and infections. There is no guarantee of the presence of the doctor at the PHC. The PHC charges patients for use of saline water and injections. Due to these inadequacies when Mahadeo Valavte was sick, he preferred going to a private medical facility and spent around Rs. 2000- Rs. 3000.

Manisha and Mahadeo Agre, from village UBhale in Taluka Chiplun submit that the nearest PHC for them is located 10 km away. Until two years ago the doctor in charge of the PHC was a good human being and therefore the PHC was well equipped. But after his departure, the PHC has become only an institution of concrete. Manish Agre feels shy to go the PHC, as there is no lady doctor who she can freely speak to and hence she has to compulsorily go to the Taluka Health Care centre to get treated. For the last one year she has been suffering with healthcare problems, due to which she has become weak. Unfortunately the local PHC is not in a position to support her and therefore she has had to avail the services of the private doctor which has made her incur an expense of Rs. 1500.

### Population Policy of Maharashtra and Infant Mortality Rate

In 2001, the Government of Maharashtra announced its 'New Population Policy', very much in tandem with the MDG-4 and 5, with the objective of reducing:

1. Total Fertility Rate from 2.7 in 1997 to 2.1 in 2004 and 1.8 in 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> Findings in National Census 2001

<sup>2</sup> Maharashtra Human Development Report (2002); Pg. 13

<sup>3</sup> Maharashtra Economic Survey Data on Health in Statistical Annexes

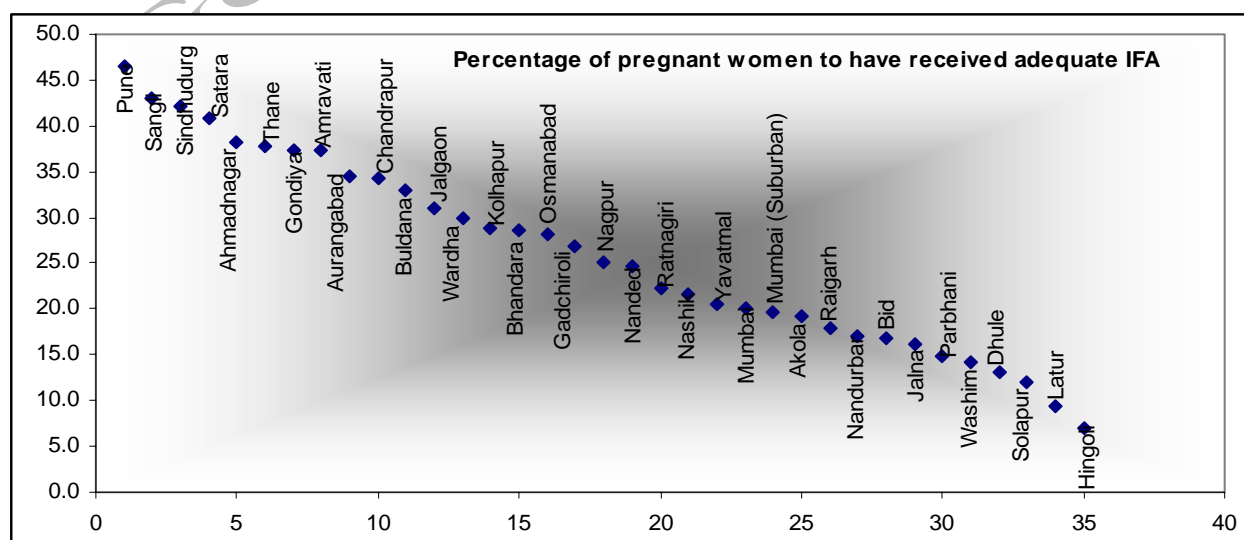
2. Crude Birth Rate from 22.5 in 1998 to 18 in 2004 and 15 in 2010.
3. Crude Death Rate from 7.7 in 1998 to 6.4 in 2004 and 5 in 2010.
4. Infant Mortality Rate from 49 in 1998 to 25 in 2004 and 15 in 2010.
5. Neonatal Mortality Rate from 33 in 1996 to 20 in 2004 and 10 in 2010.
6. Maternal Mortality Rate from 310 in 1998 to 150 in 2004 and below in 2016.

NFHS fact sheet on Maharashtra <sup>4</sup>	Total Fertility Rate (children per woman)	Infant Mortality Rate (number of infant deaths per 1000 births in last 5 yrs.)	Fully immunized children in the age group 12 to 23 months (%)
NFHS-I (1992-93)	2.86	51	64.3
NFHS-III (2005-06)	2.11	38	58.8

The table above based on NFHS (2005-06) fact sheet for Maharashtra shows that the State Administration has not been able to achieve the goals that it set for itself in the Population Policy in the context of infant mortality rate. Also distressing to note is that the percentage of fully immunized children as a percentage of living children in the same age group has dropped drastically from 64.3 to 58.8 in spite of the so-called immunization drives being implemented by the State. The survey has also found anemia among children in the age group 6 to 35 months to be remarkably high.

### Maternal Health Situation in Maharashtra

The situation of maternal health in Maharashtra seems to have improved according NFHS-III. The percentage of institutional births in the State which were 44.5% during 1992-93 have increased to 66.1% during 2005-06.



<sup>4</sup> This fact sheet can be downloaded from: <http://www.nfhsindia.org/pdf/MH.pdf>

Be that as it may, the disparities in, antenatal care, immunizations done during and after pregnancy, consumption of iron-tablets/syrups during pregnancy, across the 35 districts of Maharashtra is very alarming. While in Pune, 46.4% of the pregnant women were found to have received adequate IFA tablets/syrup during pregnancy, only 7.1% of pregnant women in Hingoli were found to have received such doses during pregnancy.

### **Anganwadi and Children in Maharashtra**

Anganwadis are considered as the heart of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme. The Anganwadi is a child-care centre, located within the village or the slum area itself. It is regarded as a focal point for the delivery of services at the community level, to children below six years of age, pregnant and nursing mothers, and adolescent girls. One Anganwadi worker is expected to serve around 250 families.

Anganwadi centre also serves as the meeting place for women's groups, mothers' clubs and mahila mandals promoting awareness and joint action for child development and women's empowerment. There are more than 60,000 Anganwadis functional under various programmes in Maharashtra.

In spite of the importance of Anganwadis in the growth of a child and in the education of women on nutritional and other aspects of qualitative growth, these Anganwadis are exposed to a number of problems and neglect.

Kalpna Tamboli, at Lonand, of Taluka Khandala in District Satara, spoke to the researchers on her problems while operating a Anganwadi at Saibai Housing Society. Her major problem is that although she is trained to do all the work at the Anganwadi she faces shortage of resources. For example, even if she is in a position to administer doses of basic health care medicines many a times she is constrained as there are none in her Anganwadi. She believes that her Anganwadi can be made more effective, if children here are provided with more amenities and better equipment to play. She is of the opinion that children must have access to natural providers of iron, calcium such as salad and milk respectively.

Vanita Kate is an Anganwadi sevika at Kole in Sangola located in District Solapur. She explained that there are three Anganwadis in the village. She has to persuade a number of parents to send in their children to her Anganwadi. She generally feeds sweet rice, rice gravy and one vegetable to her students.

She complains that her Anganwadi does not have proper toilets. Neither does it have medicines that will help her take care of health care problems such as fever in children or diarrhea. She also does not have displays which she can use to teach basic issues to students. She is upset with the fact that supervisors who come to inspect the Anganwadi only investigate but do not provide them with resources in spite of several complaints. Supervisors are keen that Ms. Kate completes her targets, which has a natural implication on the quality of her output. She feels that the children are being cheated. While they are promised sweets on 15<sup>th</sup> August and 26<sup>th</sup> January, they are not provided with any sweets as nothing reaches the Anganwadi. Overall she is extremely disturbed with the direction in which the institution of Anganwadi is moving and she only wants to work as it gives her income support.

### **Knowledge on AIDS in Maharashtra**

The Government of Maharashtra formed Maharashtra State Aids Control (MSACS) in 1998 to control HIV/AIDS pandemic. The funds are utilized to run integrated counseling and testing centres and for the 'Antiretroviral Strategy'. Under the latter, is to suppress viral replication to undetectable levels, thereby converting HIV into a chronic manageable illness.

NFHS-III data shows that knowledge of AIDS amongst women has increased rapidly in the State of Maharashtra. The percentage of ever-married women who have heard of AIDS increased from 61% in 1998-99 to 79% by the end of 2005-06. More than 90% of men in Maharashtra are seen to be aware of AIDS.

Random interviews conducted with AIDS or HIV+ patients (who do not want to disclose their identity) clearly show that the patients are discretely aware of the government programmes. Most of them have praised the approach of the doctors in public hospitals towards them in spite of knowing that they are HIV+ or AIDS patients. Some of them have also been getting their medication free of cost from public hospitals. Interviewees have suggested that the reach-out strategies of the Government need to be bettered with more effective and simple messages.

### **Malaria Control**

In 2006, Maharashtra accounted for 6% of the dengue cases reported in the country (Rajasthan accounted for the highest at 15%)<sup>5</sup>. To intensify malaria-control activities, World Bank assisted Enhanced Malaria Control Project has been started since October 1997. District Malaria Control Societies have been established and registered for 16 tribal Districts in the State. Various activities that will prevent proliferation of Malaria are being carried out through these District Malaria Control Societies. Funds are provided to these District Malaria Control Societies directly by the Centre.

An interesting study conducted by Dhiman, Shahi and others (2005)<sup>6</sup> shows that tribal beliefs and practices are still becoming major barriers to reducing the spread and intensity of malaria attacks in districts such as Gadchiroli. The paper clearly shows the basic deficiencies in the programmes being implemented in remote areas while controlling malaria, e.g. ashram schools not using mosquito nets.

### **Conclusions**

It is beyond doubt that the State Administration's outlook towards health needs a serious overhaul. Not only is the macroeconomic situation bad, the micro-situation as exhibited through interviews is even worse. The government is clearly becoming an agent of private healthcare practitioners by withdrawing itself from creating medical infrastructure and also by abstaining from providing qualitative basic healthcare services.

### **Suggestions**

1. The government must allocate a minimum of 2% of GSDP towards improving the soft and hard health infrastructure especially at the level of PHCs.
2. Most importantly, a practical incentive based programme must be implemented that will incentivize physicians and experts to spend at least two months in villages that are selected by the Government.

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<sup>5</sup> A detailed paper on this issue can be viewed at: [www.nvbdc.gov.in/Doc/DenStatusNote.pdf](http://www.nvbdc.gov.in/Doc/DenStatusNote.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Dhiman, R., Shahi, B. *et al* (2005); "Persistence of malaria transmission in Tribal Area of Maharashtra, India"; Current Science, Volume 88; No. 3; February; Pgs. 475-478

## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: IS THE STATE SENSITIVE TO ISSUES IMPACTING DIGNITY OF WOMEN AND SOCIALLY BACKWARD GROUPINGS?

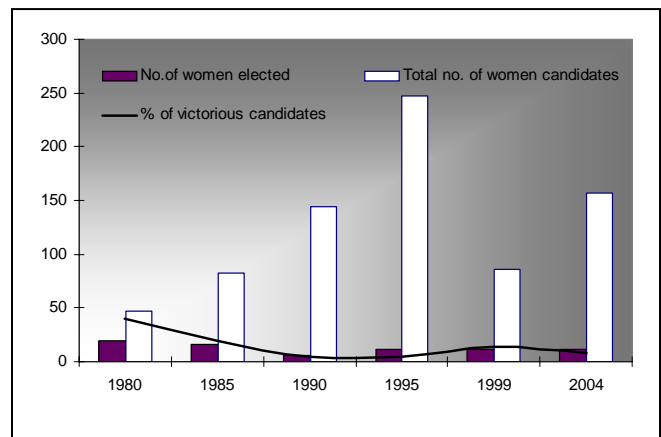
Although 'dignity' is a very subjective concept, it acquires indicators, when one identifies, frameworks in the context of which this concept is to be applied. Juxtaposing this concept in the frameworks of: 'legislature vis-à-vis women' and 'policy process/schemes vis-à-vis socially backward groupings', one can say that:

1. a legislature respects dignity of women, if among other dimensions:
  - a. it ensures that women get adequate representation in the legislature and in cabinet of ministers;
  - b. it takes up issues of relevance to women in a sustained manner and discusses them with dignity; and
  - c. ensures the passage of laws and policies that protect and enhance dignity of women and institutionalize processes of review and implementation.
2. a policy process/scheme respects dignity of socially backward groupings, if among other dimensions:
  - a. it ensures the participation of these groupings the policy/scheme formulation process;
  - b. conducts sustained reviews about the impact of policies/schemes on desired groups; and
  - c. reshapes the policy/scheme so that beneficiaries can avail benefits under the policy with lowest transactions cost

### Representation of Women in Maharashtra's Legislative Assembly

The State which boasts of several 'first women', e.g. the first lady doctor, or the first lady teacher or the first lady lawyer (Kamdar & Basak)<sup>1</sup> today has only one Woman Minister in its Council of Ministers (Cabinet + Ministers' for State). Out of 288 representatives elected in the State Legislative Assembly (2004) there are only 12 women<sup>2</sup>.

Analysis of the data in the graph shows that the number of women contesting elections in 2004 were three times more in comparison to the number of women who contested state elections in 1980. Interestingly the percentage of victorious women candidates as a total percentage of women candidates has reduced by 5 times in 2004 over 1980. This shows that while political parties are fielding more women candidates (could be out of compulsion or out of choice), people are still not ready to vest women with the power to represent them. Even though this may be resulting from a number of local, socio-cultural and political factors, it does go to show that a lot needs to be done in order to change the patriarchal mindset in Maharashtra.



<sup>1</sup> Kamdar, S. & Basak. A. (2005); "Beyond the Human Development Index: Preliminary Notes on Deprivation and Inequality; Economic and Political Weekly; August 20, Pgs: 3759 – 3765

<sup>2</sup> For more on this issue please refer to:

[http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/SE\\_2004/StatisticalReports\\_MH\\_2004.pdf](http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/SE_2004/StatisticalReports_MH_2004.pdf) (Pg: 25)

## Legislators and Dignity of Women

When the famous “Dance Bar Bill” got debated in the Vidhan Sabha, representatives of bodies such as Forum Against Oppression of Women, Majlis, Indian Centre for Human Rights and Law, Awaaz-E-Niswan witnessed the following statements being made, which clearly shows the level of insensitivity to which our own legislators can stoop to, while making remarks on women (who account for more than 50% of the voter base of the State) and issues pertaining to their dignity:

- “Isha Koppikar, she is an atom bomb, attttom bomb.”
- “..these women who dance naked, they don't deserve any sympathy”
- “...these women loot men and destroy their houses ...”
- “...these women who are opposing the ban, we will make their mothers dance...”

Interestingly this is happening in a state, which has set up the State Commission on Women as a statutory body to “improve the status and dignity of women in the society”.

## Gender Insensitivity in Budgeting in a State with a ‘Women Policy’

Maharashtra is the first state in India to formulate ‘Women Policy’ in the year 1994, which was reviewed in 2001. The main objectives of ‘Women Policy’, 2001 are:

1. women focused planning;
2. to provide sufficient fund for women’s empowerment;
3. economic development through self-help groups; and
4. formulation of programmes in agriculture and rural development keeping focus on women.

All these promises seem to have clearly remained on paper. Pandey, Kanchi and Akolkar (2004)<sup>3</sup> show that dismally small proportion of budgetary resources are committed to women. Moreover they find that proliferation of a large number of small schemes have little or no impact on women beneficiaries.

## Ahilyabai Holkar Scheme – Is the Government speaking the truth on beneficiaries?

Simple arithmetic calculations in the context of Ahilyabai Holkar Scheme which is said to enjoy the single largest allocation for women-education in the State Budget will reveal how the State tries to mask data with unrealistic figures. Under this Scheme, girls in rural areas studying in standards V to X are provided free travel in Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation Buses to attend school, if such a school is not available in their village. The share of the Government in the expenditure incurred for the year 2005-06 was Rs. 70.79 crore. The official data shows that 12.60 lakh girls availed such facility. A simple arithmetic calculation shows that the per capita allocation of the government under this scheme was a meagre Rs. 2.80 per day assuming that the girl child went to school for only 200 days of the year. Such unrealistic per capita figures only indicate that the Government is trying to inflate the number of beneficiaries under the scheme or reflect its unviability given the current costs of transport using the state transport buses across villages.

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<sup>3</sup> Pandey, D., Kanchi, A. & Akolkar, K. (2004); “Gender Audit of Maharashtra Budget: An Illustration of Current Methodology”; Economic and Political Weekly, October 30; Pgs: 4792 – 4802

## **Are women from socially backward groups truly benefiting from schemes being implemented by the Government?**

Jyoti Karle, (from the 'Mang' community) located at Ambedkar Nagar, at Nanded, was fuming when we asked her about her receiving any support from the local administration for completion of her education. A bright student who has secured distinction in her 12<sup>th</sup> standard, she has tried acquiring information on schemes from various institutions but has not received any substantive response from authorities. She is very confident about her being successful in life but said that her "wings of ambition" need some support from the State authorities. She has a very small demand which is entry into the hostel meant for girl students from socially backward groupings. She believes that if she gets a decent space to study, she can really concentrate well on her studies.

Her father, who is labourer, tried to seek benefit under the Valmiki Ambedkar Awaas Yojana but his application was shown the dustbin according to him, as he did not have monies to bribe the local counselor and the bureaucracy.

For Amrapali Bhimrao Thorat (from the 'Mahar' community), who is completing her first year Bachelors of Science, the quality of education in her junior college was not up to the mark. Hence she had to really struggle with her studies. She complained about her college teachers who according to her did not teach well in the classrooms and in fact asked students to join their private coaching classes. She could not join these private coaching classes as her parents could not afford to send her.

According to her she will be in a position to study well, if she is provided with a room in the girl's hostel as she will then have a peaceful milieu to study. She therefore wants the number of hostels for girls to be increased in the State so that girls such as her can avail of these facilities.

## **Do decision-making institutions offer dignity to elected women representatives?**

Pritibai Gajananrao Kaithwas who is a Sabhapati of 'Mahila and Balkalyan Samiti' of Zilla Parishad – Akola, is of the opinion that too many loopholes in the law do not allow them to provide legal relief to women in her region. She feels that the bureaucracy of the Zilla Parishad respects her not as a woman but because of her position. While organizing meetings of women, get-togethers and during other cultural activities, she finds that women do not put their feet forward to take decisions on issues in their villages.

She feels confident about her capacity to deliver and handles a budget of Rs. one crore eight lac under the auspices of the 'Mahila and Balkalyan Samiti'.

Varsha Bhikaji Avchar has been elected as a Sarpanch of Kanheri Sarap, in Barshi Takli, Akola in spite of the seat not being reserved for a scheduled caste. She strongly condemns the opposition she faces from the males in her village whenever she tries to resolve a dispute. She is respected throughout the village for her work and this growing respect for her seems to be a growing problem for the male community in the village, according to her. With the help of women in her village she has even tried to impose a ban on liquor shops, but has not been successful due to the hand-in-glove relationships between district bureaucracy and liquor shop licensees.

## **Issues of Dignity for Socially Backward Communities in a larger Context**

The 50<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar could not have been celebrated more shamefully as it was in Maharashtra by terming the spontaneous protests against the heinous killing of the Dalit family in Khairlanji as "political design". Time and again it has been observed, that State Administration steps up action against Dalit atrocities only when immense pressure gets created on it to take certain actions.

In spite of continuing atrocities on socially backward communities over years, a question remains as to why it took the Government of Maharashtra only incidents such as Khairlanji (November of 2006) to institute a committee to review the Scheduled Caste and The Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1959.

Another front on which governments have completely failed social backward communities is with respect to empowering them economically. Successive governments created statutory bodies (Arthik Vikas Mahamandals) with the aim to provide credit and other support to youth and women from socially backward groupings in Maharashtra. Unfortunately, governments have utilized such a great opportunity to only create institutions that further divide socially backward groupings by creating unique Mahamandals for each separate grouping. By doing so, political parties have only made an effort to consolidate their political influence over certain social groupings by enticing them to extend such support through economic instruments.

It is indeed depressing to note that these Mahamandals have been reduced to 'distressed institutions' due to their rampant politicization. The question arises that why is political leadership (even within socially backward groupings) trying to jeopardize the statutory space, which these communities have acquired for themselves after such a great struggle. CAG reports show how these Mahamandals have become sites of corruption and money laundering.

In a survey conducted by Samajik Nyay Prathisthan in 2001, it was found youth from socially backward groupings were frustrated with the transactions costs of extracting benefits from these various Mahamandals. One needs to recognize that such phenomenon is occurring when employment generation amongst the unskilled from the socially and economically marginalized is becoming an unreasonably challenging task in the context of "education poverty" that persists within these communities (as discussed on page-17). There is no clear thinking amongst political and administrative institutions on this issue, as being naïve on such concerns, does not harm their economic or political interests.

### **In conclusion**

Ensuring dignity for women and especially those belonging to the socially backward communities, in the context of policies and legislative processes requires a mindset change in this State. Gender sensitivity is completely absent in budgetary processes. This insensitivity then gets reflected in form of miniscule allocations made under various women oriented schemes as shown above in the case of Ahilyabai Holkar Scheme.

Women who have become decision-makers do find that the position of a decision-maker has brought with it the much desired respect. Unfortunately, they accept that the respect is for their position and not for them as a woman.

Moreover, the issue of socioeconomic and political dignity of socially backward groupings in the State meets with sporadic and not sustained responses from State mechanisms. The State continues to act under pressure and not by choice to resolve the problems of socially backward communities.

### **Suggestions**

1. The Role of the State Commission on Women must be expanded to ensure that women in Maharashtra are given their right to economic dignity in the context of budgetary allocations. The State Commission on Women must conduct a detailed gender audit of budgetary allocations being made by all departments and then prepare a white paper on the same and lay it before the Maharashtra Legislature for debate and action before the next budget.

2. A special cell must be created under the Ministry of Primary and Higher Education, Government of Maharashtra, to generate focused programmes that can be offered to youth from socially backward communities with an aim to facilitate their participation in the growing services sector of the State.

Goal3: Promoting Gender Equality & Empowering Women

## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: STATE AND LIVELIHOODS or STATE V/S LIVELIHOODS

### Linkage between environment and livelihoods in Maharashtra

Environmental sustainability and livelihoods have an extremely close linkage in a state like Maharashtra wherein farmers, tribal communities, nomadic tribes constitute around 63% of the total population. Natural resources provide life to a large number of small and marginal farmers and tribal communities in the State who have no access to support provided by the State. Degradation of water resources and soil hits becomes one of the major forces in transforming these citizens of Maharashtra into migrant labour.

Ensuring a right to a dignified livelihood and employment opportunity by ensuring effective access to natural resources and other essential support mechanisms across the State, and not in certain pockets, is going one of the critical factors to reduce migration of communities, thereby reducing pressure on natural resource bowls in Maharashtra. Concentration of communities in such resource pockets is leading to rapid exhaustion of renewable and non-renewable resources in the region thereby harming its environment and ecology.

### Water in the State

It is important to note that Maharashtra is bestowed with rock structure that does not allow rain water percolation. About 90% of the land in the state has basaltic rock, which is non-porous and prevents rainwater percolation into the ground and makes the area drought-prone.

The State of Environment Report written by the Indira Gandhi Institute for Development and Research (IGIDR) for the State accepts that water problem in Maharashtra is of a “perennial nature”. The report clearly points out that politicization of agriculture and growth of unviable sugarcane belts in the State have resulted in the over-consumption of water in the state. According to the report, this crop grown in 3% area of the state ends up consuming 70% of the total water utilized for agriculture.

According to the report, over the years, per capita water supply has changed considerably. The disparities in the amount of water supply in various urban centres as well as within different areas of a city are very striking. For example, though Mumbai has a maximum average water supply of 200 liters per capita per day (lpcd), on an average, the supply in different areas of the city is very much skewed. While slum areas of Mumbai are not getting even 90 lpcd, the well off areas receive as high as 300-350 lpcd.

Regions	Parameters of Water Quality				
	Fluoride	Nitrate	Salinity	Arsenic	Iron
Konkan		Thane	Thane, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg		Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg
Pune	Satara, Solapur	Sangli, Solapur, Satara			Solapur, Kolhapur
Nashik	Nashik				
Aurangabad	Beed	Beed, Parbhani, Dharampur			
Amravati	Yavatmal	Yavatmal	Amravati, Akola, Buldhana		
Nagpur		Nagpur, Bhandara		Nagpur (2001), Gadchiroli (2001)	Nagpur, Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, Bhandara.

Pollution of rivers, lakes and other water resources is very high. The table above clearly shows Nitrate pollution is most prevalent in four of the five divisions in the State

The IGIDR report further states that maximum amount of untreated waste water (2382.64 million liters per day) is released by Maharashtra.

### **Land Degradation<sup>1</sup>**

Soil erosion by water is a major factor for land degradation in Maharashtra. It is greater in the regions receiving short periods of heavy rainfall and is also accelerated by the absence of vegetation and undulating topography.

Maharashtra's soils are highly deficient in nutrients when compared with the soils of other Indian states. They are lacking in phosphorous (P), potassium (K) and nitrogen (N), mainly because farmers in rain-fed areas use very little fertilisers.

Further, excessive use of water for irrigation also leads to increasing salinity of soils. For example, in the Kolhapur region, due to the location of sugar mills, farmers started cultivating sugarcane which is a highly water intensive crop. However, the region's fine-grained black soils do not allow penetration of water, leading to a continuous build up of salt levels. It is estimated that after a single harvest of sugarcane, the soil salinity increases by 20 to 25 tonnes/ha. Excess salinity in the soil reduces the productivity of land.

### **Farmer in a state of Panic and Despair**

In such a evolving scenario wherein farmers and tribal communities are fast losing their resource base, one expects the State to step in with packages that ensure rebalancing of natural resource bowls.

Unfortunately, the state has gradually withdrawn itself from promoting farmer friendly technologies and has provided more than adequate space for private sector to introduce technologies through seeds and pesticides that has not necessarily been farmer friendly<sup>2</sup>. Irrigation projects have become a site of corruption and cooperation credit institutions have absolved themselves of all responsibilities in spite of becoming rich on the money contributed by farmers<sup>3</sup>. Subsidies on inputs are being gradually withdrawn, which is thereby increasing the cost of cultivation. The prices being provided by the state to products such as cotton do not cover all the costs being incurred by farmers on cultivation, transportation and sale of cotton. On the other hand the farmer has to compete with subsidized imports due to progressive liberalization of subsidized agricultural imports into India<sup>4</sup>.

While a number of Dalit farmers have been bestowed with 'Mahar Vatan Land', large tracts of such land remain uncultivated, thanks to the absence of water resources and other facilities. Siddharth Babu Ranpise of Gondavle Budruk in Taluka Man; District Satara has to regularly migrate in search of work in spite of having a sizeable piece of land. The reason being that in spite of his several requests, he has not been able to acquire a loan for his well, credit is not available to him when he wants it. Most importantly, when he is back to his land after working as a farm labour in other tehsils, he has to fight against the encroachment which has happened in his absence. Similar such grouses have also been expressed by Sangeeta Vijay Bhosale of Bijwadi, Taluka Man, District Satara. Both these farmers have demanded implementation of EGS on their respective farms (a suggestion that has already been made on page: 13)

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<sup>1</sup> Explanation based on the discussions in the State of Environment Report prepared by IGIDR

<sup>2</sup> There are a number of studies of Kalamkar (2006), Narsalay (2006) and others which have shown how adoption of Bt-cotton of specific varieties sold to farmers before 2007 has pushed farmers into further indebtedness

<sup>3</sup> The recent controversies surrounding siphoning of funds to the tune of thousands of crores in large irrigation projects is evidence in this regard.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this read Ramesh Chand (2004) and Narsalay (2007) [forthcoming]

*The farmer is therefore faced with a trident of poor credit, high cost agriculture and growing imports. He and his family are in a state of panic and despair over their growing indebtedness. Government packages do not seem to be working<sup>5</sup>. Farmers, who for ages have been guardians of local environment, have now started voicing their keenness to come out of agriculture due to the growing unviability of the latter. Maharashtra has therefore achieved the distinction of becoming globally infamous for its farmer suicides – phenomenon which shows no signs of receding.*

Capturing this phenomenon in the context of the cotton farmer in the words of Srijit Mishra (2006)<sup>6</sup>, “The rain-dependent cotton growing farmers of Vidarbha are faced with declining profitability because of dumping in the global market by the US, low import tariffs, failure of the Monopoly Cotton Procurement Scheme and withdrawal of the State (resulting in declining public investment in agriculture, poor government agriculture extension services and the diminishing role of formal credit institutions.)”

### **Migration of farmers**

In the context of such an uneven resource terrain, migration of small and marginal farmers has become a regular phenomenon. A visit to villages in Sangola Taluka and in the Man region of Maharashtra in the months of December/January expose anybody to the brutal reality of empty houses and overflowing trucks of migrants. Farmers in this region complain that they are exhausted working on the employment guarantee schemes as there is hardly any work left to complete.

The State continues to only express sympathy for these farmers and passes resolutions to support them showing that it has the intent to support them but lacks the spine to come forward to alleviate the pain and suffering. It conveniently continues to neglect the root of this migration, as a solution that will arrest such a problem will naturally reduce the supply of cheap labour to farms in Maharashtra.

### **In Conclusion**

Ensuring environmental sustainability in the State of Maharashtra is a political problem, and cannot be merely solved by providing cosmetic solutions in the realm of science and technology. The State continues to see environment and livelihoods from different lenses. By doing so the State succeeds in a-politicizing this issue.

Besides certain structural deficits, water and land degradation are closely linked to the model of industrialization and agriculture being promoted by the state. The state is conveniently pushing models of development that appease the urban middle class and elite at the cost of marginal rural farmers and tribals.

Sadly even owners of resources such as land (in this case Maharashtra land holders) are not in a position to utilize it viably due to the callous attitude of the State machinery to provide these land holders with the necessary resource wherewithal. Thus even owners of resources are forced to see the quality of their assets erode due to conduct of the State.

### **Suggestions**

We need to recognize that farmers have been guardians of ecology since ages. The need of the hour is to promulgate measures that will once again provide these guardians a central role in conserving environment and becoming facilitators of sustainable development in the State. One of the ways of doing so is to make farming viable and profitable, which is easier, said than done in the current political context of the State.

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the misapplication of mind on part of the government while designing these packages read, Narayanmoorthy, A. (2006); “Relief Packages for Farmers: Can it Stop Suicides”; Economic and Political Weekly; August 05, Pgs: 3353 – 3355

<sup>6</sup> Mishra S. (2006); “Farmer’s Suicides in Maharashtra”; Economic and Political Weekly; April 22, Pgs: 1538 – 1545

The report once again suggests that a EGS must now be utilized to resuscitate the farm sector in Maharashtra. A farmer and his family must be paid his daily basket of EGS-wage and food, for not more than 180 days a year, but continuously for a span two years only, thereby incentivising such families to make their farms more productive in a time bound manner. Details of such scheme can be worked out in order to ensure their effectiveness. Needless to say that such a scheme will reduce migration, will provide children in the family to get educated in one place, and most importantly provide the farmer and his family a dignified livelihood and help Maharashtra to grow in a sustained manner.

Goal7: Ensuring Environment Sustainability