

Fulfilling The Promise To End Social Exclusion

**A Review of the Dalit Agenda in the
National Common Minimum Programme**

WADA NA TODO ABHIYAN

April 2007

Fulfilling The Promise To End Social Exclusion - A Review of the Dalit Agenda in National Common Minimum Programme (April 2007, Delhi)

Published By:

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan

National Secretariat, C-1/E, Second Floor, Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110 016, INDIA, Tel: 91-11-46082371

• Fax: 91-11-46082372, Email: info@wadanatodo.net • Website: www.wadanatodo.net

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (Keep Your Promise Campaign) is a national initiative to hold the government accountable to its promise to end Poverty, Social Exclusion & Discrimination.

This campaign 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.

We aim 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, Denotified & Nomadic Tribes, Women, Children, Youth, the Differently Abled and People Living with HIV-AIDS are mainstreamed across programs, policies and development goals of the government. We are represented by a network of more than 900 rights action groups across 15 states of India, who have come together to link social groups and engage policy makers on issues of strategic relevance.

You can be part of our effort by:

- mobilizing groups and disseminating information on our key issues and collective actions
- contributing information on the policies and programs that are being monitored by the Abhiyan
- participating in the initiatives of our state networks and partners
- helping us co-ordinate with the media and raise resources for our activities
- signing up to be a member of the campaign through our website <www.wadanatodo.net>

Other Publications of *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan*:

- Securing Rights – A Citizens' Report on the Millennium Development Goals, Sep 2005
- The 2nd Civil Society Review of the National Common Minimum Programme, May 2006
- NREGA – A Resource Book, Nov 2006
- The People's Verdict - Outcomes of the National Tribunal on NREGA, Dec 2006
- Nine Is Mine – 9% GDP for Health & Education (A Primer), Jan 2007
- Gender & Governance – Reviewing the Women's Agenda in the National Common Minimum Programme, Mar 2007

PREFACE

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (Keep Your Promise campaign) represents the effort of over 900 organizations, active in 15 states of India, to hold the government accountable to its promise to End Poverty & Social Exclusion – as promised in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the National Development Goals and the National Common Minimum Program.

Dalits have been recognized as one of the most important constituencies within the Wada Na Todo Abhiyan since its inception. The first public action organized by the Abhiyan immediately after its formation was the Dalit Dignity Rally that was held on 5 December 2004. Since then, the Abhiyan has focused on integrating the concerns and perspective of Dalits in all its initiatives, and has consistently emphasized the need to make their concerns central to the strategies and outcomes of regional and global efforts to address poverty and governance accountability.

This report draws attention to the status of the Dalit agenda in the National Common Minimum Programme, with a focus on key issues of livelihood, education and budgetary resources. The report clearly points out that 'Promises Are Not Enough' and there is a need for emphatic and decisive action in favour of the Dalits if the United Progressive Alliance is to fulfill the mandate of the marginalized people who brought them into power at the Centre in 2004.

Ashok Bharati (National Conference Of Dalit Organizations) & Paul Divakar (National Campaign For Dalit Human Rights) set the tone of the review with incisive comments on the key challenges that need to be addressed by the National Common Minimum Programme.

This assessment is taken forward by further evaluations of the critical issues. *Anindo Banerjee (Praxis) & Ashok Bharati* jointly review the implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act from the Dalit perspective. The goal of universal education and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is reviewed by *Annie Namala (IIDS)* and an analysis of budgetary resources and the Special Component Plan has been contributed by *the Centre for Budget & Governance Accountability*.

This publication has been timed to coincide with the 116th birth anniversary of the great leader and visionary Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar which falls on 14th April - and thereby to serve as a reminder to government and civil society that we have a historical duty to fulfill the agenda for social justice that he has set for the Dalit peoples, the Indian nation and for humankind.

- Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, April 2007

“Government Needs to Take Decisive Action In Favour of Dalits”

By Ashok Bharati (NACDOR)¹

The National Common Minimum Programme of the UPA Government, which came to power after the 14th Lok Sabha election, has six basic principles. The fifth principle speaks to provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs and religious minorities.

However this does not mean that the other five principles have nothing to do with the Dalits, Adivasis and other minorities. Since the government accepts the principle of the Special Component Plan, the rights of the Dalits must be considered and integrated across all the basic principles. The Inter-Ministry Task Force Report highlights several provisions within the National Common Minimum Programme that have special relevance to Dalits. These pertain to:

a) Food Security

- A comprehensive medium-term strategy for food and nutrition security
- Strengthening the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the poorest and backward blocks of the country, and launching special schemes to reach food grains to the most destitute and infirm.
- Establishment of Food Banks in food-scarce areas, and Antyodaya cards for all households at risk of hunger

b) Land & Livelihoods

- The UPA (United Progressive Alliance) will urge states to make legislation to confer ownership rights of minor forest produce, including tendu patta, to all people from weaker sections who work in the forests
- All reservation quotas, including those relating to promotions, will be fulfilled in a time-bound manner. To codify all reservations, a Reservation Act will be enacted
- A comprehensive national programme for minor irrigation of lands owned by dalits and adivasis will be launched.
- Landless families will be endowed with land through implementation of land ceiling and land redistribution legislation. No reversal of ceilings legislation will be permitted.
- The UPA is very sensitive to the issues of affirmative action, including reservations in the private sector. A national dialogue with all political parties, industry and other organizations will be initiated to see how best the private sector can fulfill the aspirations of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe youth.

¹ Ashok Bharati is the Co-ordinator of the National Conference of Dalit Organizations. Formed in December 2001, NACDOR is a confederation of more than 300 grass root Dalit Organisations spreaded all over India. NACDOR is the founder of World Dignity Forum and a key partner of ‘Wada Na Todo Abhiyan’. It is closely linked with the World Social Forum, Global Call to Action Against Poverty and the United Nations Millennium Campaign.

Stand Alone Promises

Contrary to the principle of integration emphasized in the Special Component Plan, we find that the promises for Dalits made in the National Common Minimum Program are not integrated in the major programs and initiatives of the UPA, thus depriving them of the mechanisms and resources required for their implementation.

For instance, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – known as the flagship programme of the government – does not contain any specific reference to or strategies to reach and ensure the participation of Dalits. Experiences of the Rozgar Adhikar Yatras (Livelihood Rights Rallies) conducted across 6 states of India between August to November 2006, show that even the basic information about NREGA has not reached many Dalit communities, let alone the next steps of being issued job cards or provided adequate wages. Provisions related to the irrigation of dalit lands have not been included in the Bharat Nirman – another flagship programme for rural redevelopment, and schemes like the National Urban Renewal Mission actively advocate for the repeal of the Urban Land Ceiling Act which social activists report will adversely affect the availability of land for the urban poor – a large majority of whom are Dalits.

The expert committees that have been formed to develop the key policy initiatives of the UPA – such as the National Knowledge Commission and the National Advisory Council – too do not have a single member from the Dalit community. As of May 2006 (when the NAC was still functional), the National Advisory Council held 21 meetings, issues 21 Press Releases, developed 37 Concept Papers and submitted 29 communications to the Government. None of these addressed the issues and concerns of the Dalits.

Even an incident of gross human violation like the Khairlanji massacres and incidences of violence that erupted in Maharashtra last year, were not enough for the government to sit up and take note that concerted action is needed to address the basic issues of security, dignity and rights of the Dalit communities.

Special Efforts Needed To Make Promises A Reality

If the government is serious about keeping its promises to the Dalits, it needs to ensure that special efforts, resources and provisions are made – both in relation to the mainstream programs of the NCMP as well as with regard to Dalit specific schemes and initiatives.

Despite the assurances made by the Prime Minister in his speech to the National Development Council approving the Approach Paper of the XI Five Year Plan on 9th December 2006, only 3.08% of the Budget 2007-08 has been committed to the marginalized groups, as against a population of 22.5% Dalit & Adivasis, and 52% backward classes. Similarly, while it has been making all the right noises in support of reservation legislation and private sector reservations for the dalits, there is still a long way to go before the seeming intent is translated into practice.

The need of the hour is for the government to take bold, decisive action in favour of the dalits and marginalized communities. This is not just a survival issue for the Dalits, but a matter of survival for the government itself – which was brought into power at the Centre on the strength of its promises to make a difference to the Dalits and marginalized communities.

“Economic Discrimination Should Be Made A Punishable Offence”

By Paul Divakar (NCDHR)²

The National Common Minimum Programme of the UPA Government had the potential to change some of the fundamental blocks to the development of the Dalits by way of the assurances that it contains in relation to land, livelihoods and education. However, in relation to the historical divide of the Indian society on the lines of caste, the government has to offer a stronger remedy than policy promises to ensure that Dalits are able to achieve their entitlements.

In this regard, there is much to learn from the experiences of the SC/ ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Despite its delayed introduction in the form of legislation - as late as 1995, and the hurdles faced in its comprehensive and effective implementation, today it is the single enforceable instrument for protection against a wide range of discriminations that the Dalits experience.

Make Rights Enforceable

The reality even today is that when Dalits aspire to be part of new development interventions – even if so much as to claim use of newly introduced canal irrigation - their life security is at risk. Therefore, any provisions that are targeted at Dalits cannot be framed in the nature of a political wish-list, but must be backed by concrete safeguards and enforcement rules.

For instance, the move towards an Equal Opportunities Act is a welcome step to ensure that Dalits are included in the formal workforce of the nation, and reservations are extended to the private sector. However to ensure that the provisions of the Act become operational, it is important for us to single out the different levels at which exclusion is pervasive – from education, access to information about opportunities, review of applications, recruitment to opportunities for growth and leadership within the job. Checks and balances must be defined and implemented at every level, and the factors of discrimination or ‘de-selection’ of Dalits at these various stages cannot be left as notional, but must be treated as a cognizable offence.

In the past, much of our focus has been on defining and attacking the social and cultural aspects of discrimination, however the need of the hour now is to wage a similar battle against the economic and political aspects of discrimination. In other words, it is important to be able to see the broader spectrum of human rights and define our strategies and actions accordingly.

The focus on the land and livelihood rights of the Dalits is part of this effort. A large majority of dalits are landless labourers and small farmers with less than one acre of land. Despite this situation, the government would rather prioritize the acquisition of land for distribution among corporations, private institutions and land developers rather than redistributing it to ensure economic security for Dalts and other landless poor.

The dominance of caste affiliation in determining employment is still borne out by the fact that more than 70% of the Dalits that are employed by the Central Government are in the position of Sweepers. On the

² Paul Divakar is the Convenor of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights. NCDHR is part of a wider struggle to abolish "untouchability" and to "cast out caste" which continue to be a brutal reality for more than 160 million Dalits living in India today.

other hand, the doors of the private sector remain largely closed to the Dalits where they are ill equipped to compete with the forces of the market – be it in relation to land, labour, capital or services.

Staking A Claim To Resources

In the past few years we have been concentrating on developing our demands in relation to the budgetary provisions for Dalits. Even though the Special Component Plan (later known as the Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan or SCSP) clearly outlines the principle of resource allocation in proportion to percentage of population, as of 2004-05 the SCSP forms only 12.62% of the Total State Plan Outlay, against a Dalit population of 16.2% (2001 Census). In 2006-07, the Plan Allocation earmarked for SCs against the Total Plan Allocation of the Central Government too stands only at 4.25%³.

There is a need for us to pay more attention to creating a governance agenda that emphasizes the development of the Dalits. This includes a review of the existing policies and programs, such as the National Common Minimum Programme from the perspective of the Dalits and the negotiation of specific demands in relation to the same.

It is important for the government to realize that the targets set even by its own initiatives such as the 'National Rural Health Mission' and 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' will be impossible to achieve without noting that the Dalit community fares worst in relation to the corresponding issues of Maternal & Infant Mortality or Enrolment.

The increase of resources and programs for education, creation of assets and capacities is a must if Dalits are to be able to transcend the binds of poverty and exclusion. Many of our long standing demands are relevant to the National Common Minimum Programme and include:

- the formation of national and state level 'Education Commission for Dalits'
- the creation of 'Women Healthcare Statutory Commissions' with special focus on Dalit women
- a targeted program to enable Dalit women to gain a minimum of 5 acres of cultivable land, registered in her name
- the adoption of a national labour policy for the unorganized sector – where majority of Dalit women are concentrated, and
- the implementation of The Ambedkar Principles to promote employment of Dalits in the private sector

³ Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability

One year of NREGA – Are Dalits Faring Any Better Today?

By Anindo Banerjee⁴ & Ashok Bharati⁵

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA, hereafter) that came into effect in February 2006 has been viewed as one of the flagship interventions of Government of India aimed at poverty reduction. During the days following its launch, it was received with an overwhelming sense of optimism, on account of its stated commitment to provide employment on demand and to provide compensation for any lapses in timely delivery of employment. Most significantly, the scheme was launched with an outlay of Rs. 16,419 crore for the year 2006-2007 alone and offered a golden opportunity to pro-actively reach out to poor communities affected by burgeoning agrarian crises, devastating disasters and an acute dearth of gainful livelihoods.

Given the strikingly high incidence of poverty in most habitations of the *dalits*, the touchstone of NREGA's success definitely lies in its ability to make a meaningful difference to the lives of millions of *dalits* living in difficult circumstances.

This article seeks to examine key issues relating to NREGA's reach and performance in relation to the *dalits* and early trends of its impact.

The Paradox of Excellence

According to a report of the Ministry of Rural Development (ref. Table 1), nearly one-fourth of the 701 million employment days generated by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India up to March 16, 2007 were availed by scheduled castes.

Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu accounted for the highest coverage of scheduled castes under NREGA, delivering between 55-70% of all jobs to them. On the other hand, the coverage of scheduled castes in states like *Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tripura* did not even match up to the existing proportion of scheduled castes in the population of the state.

Similarly, the inclusion of scheduled castes in states like *Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh*, which ranked higher than most states in terms of the number of employment-days generated, did not significantly exceed the actual SC composition in the state's population (with provision of only 16.76% and 12.85% employment days to dalits respectively).

What Does the NREGA Promise?

- 100 days of adult employment for every rural households; 1/3rd of workers to be women
- Registration of work through the Gram Panchayat / Block Program Officer & Provision of 'Job Card'
- Allocation of work within 15 days from the date of application by the Gram Panchayat / Block Program Officer
- Payment of the statutory minimum wage applicable to agricultural workers in the State
- Payment of unemployment allowance if work is not provided within 15 days of application
- Creation of durable assets & livelihood resource base of the poor through works
- Work done by contractors is not permissible

⁴ Associated with Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices and *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan*

⁵ Ashok Bharati is the Founder Convenor of World Dignity Forum, Co-ordinator of NACDOR & associated with *Wada na Todo Abhiyan*

In view of the fact the scheme doesn't differentiate between the poor and the non-poor, or between *dalits* and non-*dalits* in terms of eligibility for employment, the relative inclusion of dalits in delivery of employment can be taken as a good indicator of a state's commitment to equitable development. Given that the scheme needs to be extended with greater urgency to communities known to suffer from greater degrees of poverty, treatment of *dalits* at par with other population sub-groups points at the lack of a good understanding of poverty and the lack of commitment to use the scheme as an opportunity to reach out pro-actively to the poorest population sub-groups.

This also points at the need for extending reservations to dalits in identification of beneficiaries, which is a constitutional right of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The NREGA in its current form has no such provision.

Table 1: Inclusion of scheduled castes in employments provided under NREGA				
State	Total no. of employment persondays provided	Persondays of employment provided to Scheduled Castes		Proportion of SC population to total population (2001)
	(in lakh)	(in lakh)	%	SC %
Andhra Pradesh	548.23	166.18	30.31	16.19
Arunachal Pradesh	4.53	-	-	0.56
Assam	471.97	42.58	9.02	6.85
Bihar	297.24	138.86	46.72	15.72
Gujarat	84.57	5.62	6.65	7.09
Haryana	19.66	11.59	58.95	19.35
Himachal Pradesh	17.34	5.17	29.82	24.72
Jammu Kashmir	9.65	0.63	6.53	7.59
Karnataka	182.22	59.91	32.88	16.20
Kerala	10.85	2.04	18.80	9.81
Madhya Pradesh	1590.73	266.66	16.76	15.17
Maharashtra	229.09	53.67	23.43	10.20
Manipur	8.26	-	-	2.77
Meghalaya	2.01	-	-	0.48
Mizoram	2.37	-	-	0.03
Nagaland	11.82	-	-	0.00
Orissa	626.61	151.53	24.18	16.53
Punjab	13.48	9.44	70.03	28.85
Rajasthan	912.79	142.08	15.57	17.16
Sikkim	2.01	0.02	1.00	5.02
Tamil Nadu	151.18	82.79	54.76	19.00
Tripura	45.74	7.84	17.14	17.37
Uttar Pradesh	617.64	351.21	56.86	21.15
West Bengal	280.98	86.86	30.91	23.02
Chattisgarh	531.49	68.27	12.85	11.61
Jharkhand	308.14	74.17	24.07	11.84
Uttanchal	30.05	7.63	25.39	17.87
Total	7010.64	1734.76	24.74	16.20

Entitlements Under NREGA – Myriad Ways Of Denial

During the National Tribunal on NREGA organized at the India Social Forum by *Wada N Todo Abhiyan* and PACS in November 2006, hundreds of *dalit* labourers recounted numerous instances of denial of their entitlements under NREGA.

For instance, Anita Devi, a landless *Musahar* woman from East Champaran district of Bihar mentioned how job cards were issued in her village only after people organized a *dharna* in September 2006. However, even after officially applying for work in September, she had not been given any work till the second week of November, making a mockery of significant provisions like 'unemployment allowance', which makes any labourer eligible for receiving unemployment allowance on a daily basis, if not provided employment within 15 days of demand. As a matter of fact, not a single labourer present at the NREGA Tribunal could recall any payment of unemployment allowance, to anyone for even a day. Various instances of irregularities in provision of employment opportunities were brought to the fore by *dalit* labourers at the Tribunal held at the India Social Forum.

Common grievances included (i) issue of extremely limited number of job cards, (ii) unreasonable delays in issue of cards, (iii) job cards lacking necessary records, e.g. dates of employment provision, wages paid etc., (iv) demand of bribe for issuing cards/photographs, (v) excessive delays in employment provision despite demands being made long before, (vi) underpayment of wages, (vii) underreporting of number of days of employment provided and payment of less wages accordingly and (viii) non-payment of unemployment allowance. Significantly, none of the *panchayats* represented at the tribunal could recall distribution of more than fifty job cards. In many *panchayats* of the country, it is common practice for supervisors and engineers to deny minimum wages payable to labourers by quoting deficiencies in the quantum of work performed by the latter, which affects labourers from the *dalit* communities the most on account of their relatively limited ownership of land and other productive assets.

Limited Reach Vis-À-Vis Hot Spots Of Hunger And Disasters

Since the launch of NREGA, several appalling cases of starvation deaths have occurred in the country, mostly involving *dalits* as victims. In some cases, as in the case of Sarupiya Devi of Darbhanga district, Bihar, who worked for 40 days under the scheme before dying of hunger, the fatal delay in payment of wages points at the typical apathy of administrators of the scheme towards marginalized people. Unfortunately, Sarupiya Devi's death, publicly discussed and condemned during a *jan sunvai* organized by the All India Agricultural Labour Association in August 2006 at New Delhi while the Monsoon session of parliament was underway, did not create any sense of urgency towards expediting the delivery of the scheme, and till date, NREGA remains a virtual non-starter across a large number of *panchayats* in Bihar. Similar instances of hunger deaths of people who could never avail of employment under NREGA despite possessing valid job cards were also reported from some other places, e.g. Rohtas. The exclusion of a large number of *dalit* communities in disaster-prone regions of several states, e.g. Jharkhand, Orissa and Bihar, where the scheme hasn't progressed beyond tokenistic issue of job cards to a handful of rural households, is appalling.

Misappropriations by Non-Dalits In Heterogeneous Communities

A critical area of concern relating to NREGA' reach vis-à-vis communities of the *dalits* is the high likelihood of misappropriation of employment opportunities by non-*dalits* in communities where *dalits* co-exist along with socially dominant castes. For instance, in villages like Badanpura in Karauli district of

Rajasthan, people hailing from dominant castes are known to forcefully claim a share in the wages of *dalit* labourers earned from supply of labour under NREGA, by pressurizing the *sarpanch*. As a result, not a single labourer from the *dalit* community has ever been able to claim their daily entitlement of Rs. 73/- payable as minimum wages in lieu of unskilled labour.

Instances of Assertion and Actualization Of Entitlements

In several places, *dalit* communities and their organizations had to forcefully assert themselves against instances of denial of their entitlements under NREGA. One of the significant acts of assertion of *dalit* labourers was seen in Nagphana (Bolangir district, Orissa) where hundreds of labourers went on a mass-strike in protest against non-payment of wages as per the standard piece-rate amounts specified under the provisions of the Act. The labourers insisted on payments on a pro-rata basis for every additional quantum of work performed in excess of the standard specifications and did not turn up for work till the contractors agreed to pay them their due wages. Subsequently, the labourers also set up a committee of their own in the village, which keeps copies of all relevant documents and muster rolls relating to employment activities and other schemes in the village, including works implemented directly by the *panchayat*. Similar acts of protest were organized at Villupuram (Tamil Nadu) where *dalit* labourers refused to accept wages falling short of the minimum wages prescribed by the state government.

During 2006, significant campaigns were undertaken under the banner of NACDOR – a national level confederation of *dalit* organizations – in several states of India, with the objectives of bringing about mass awareness about NREGA and exposing glaring irregularities. NACDOR's initiatives to this effect included *Rozgar Adhikar Yatras*, Public Tribunals and direct dialogues with government functionaries.

Rozgar Adhikar Yatra, Madhya Pradesh (16 – 31 October 2006)

A Rozgar Adhikar Yatra to promote awareness of and participation of in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in Madhya Pradesh was organized across 18 districts of MP. The Yatra brought to light the key difficulties being faced by people, particularly Dalits, in accessing the NREGA.

The administrative process for obtaining Job Cards has been very slow and payments of wages have been delayed. The creation of ecologically sustainable infrastructure and the improvement of the land of marginalized and Dalit farmers have not been prioritized as per the provisions of the Act. Workers have been deprived of relevant equipments and crèche facilities for the children, and contractors are being permitted to work in a clear-cut violation of the provisions of NREGA.

The Rozgar Adhikar Yatra concluded with a public awareness meeting and a massive rally to the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly. A delegation met with Chief Minister and delivered a memorandum of suggestions for effective implementation of NREGA. This included recommendations for the training of Panchayat representatives in implementing the NREGA, training of the elected Dalit & Adivasi representatives, and the provision of compensation allowance in absence of work allotments.

Source: National Conference of Dalit Organizations (NACDOR)

Salient Programme Implications

Dalits, bearing a greater susceptibility to exclusion due to social reasons, need to be purposively targeted and reporting of their coverage under the scheme must be made mandatory for all *panchayats* known to be inhabited by *dalit* communities. Similarly, known hot spots of hunger, natural disasters and epidemics, mostly coincident with habitations of *dalit* communities, must be purposively targeted under the scheme.

Only a clearly articulated policy of affirmative action favouring pro-active inclusion of *dalits* can make a scheme like NREGA effectively contribute to poverty reduction. The scheme needs to be envisaged as an opportunity to address the disparities between *dalits* and non-*dalits*, by according preference to *dalit* labourers, locating work-sites closer to *dalit* habitations and deputing a greater number of administrators/monitors hailing from *dalit* communities.

Outcomes of the National Tribunal on NREGA (Delhi, November 2006)

On 10 November 2006, more than 1000 people representing experiences of NREGA across 14 states gathered at the capital, Delhi to contribute to an evaluation of the program from the perspective of the most marginalized communities. Depositions extended across six hours, and culminated with the presentation of key findings before a Jury comprising of K. R. Venugopal - Former IAS officer, Former Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Rapporteur, National Human Rights Commission, and Annie Raja – General Secretary, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW).

The Jury recognized that the implementation of the NREGA is among the most significant steps taken by the United Progressive Alliance towards the fulfillment of the promises made to the people through the National Common Minimum Program. There is also a notable level of expectation, energy and efforts among civil society groups across states to ensure that the NREGA is successfully implemented across the country.

The Jury noted that there were reports of exclusion from almost every section of the marginalized and across states, pointing to the urgent need for concerted action between government agencies and civil society organizations to ensure that the program reaches those who need it the most – the poorest of the poor. The government must purposively seek to include scheduled castes, women and other marginalized sections of society in the NREGA.

The inherent exclusion of women from the equal opportunity for employment – by virtue of the provision for only one member of the household to gain work – was also adjudged as one of the weakest links of the program.

The stipulated wage provided through the program – an average of Rs. 60 per day – is judged to be grossly inadequate, and a wage revision to the amount of Rs. 120 – 130 is recommended to ensure that a family is able to meet its basic entitlements of food, clothing, housing, education and health.

The Jury concluded that the NREGA can only succeed with a combination of strong political will and able administration. The role of civil society organizations towards opinion building and advocacy needs to be sustained and strengthened towards this objective.

Ensuring Universal Elementary Education for Dalit Children through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

By Annie Namala⁶

By not recognizing the dynamic process of caste in our everyday lives, we strengthen the barriers that prevent Dalit children and communities in participating and accessing their rights, development programmes and services; accentuate their vulnerability and increase the inequalities between them and other social groups. We forfeit opportunities of fine-tuning our mechanisms to eliminate caste discrimination. We also fail to recognize the resilience and coping mechanisms of Dalits in enhancing their development. This paper looks at the specific concerns of Dalit children in the SSA programme and the discussion is built on existing recommendations for improved implementation of SSA.

Dalit Children's Right to Education

The particular need to protect Dalit children's right to education is enshrined in Article 46 of the Indian Constitution "The state shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation". Article 15 (4) underscores the state's basic commitment to positive discrimination and Article 21 A provides for free and compulsory education to all children in the 6-14 years age-group. The child population of India in this age group is 21.68 crores, a quarter of who belong to Scheduled Caste (Dalit) communities.

The Constitutional provisions are reflected in policy statements: The National Policy on Education, 1986/1992 emphasises that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women and in securing a rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities.

One of the six basic principles of the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government states its intention "To provide for full equality of opportunity, particularly in education and employment for Scheduled Castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs and religious minorities". The Ministry of Human Resource Development "The nation is firmly committed to providing Education for All, the priority areas being free and compulsory primary education, covering children with special needs, eradication of illiteracy, vocationalization, education for women's equality, and special focus on the education of SCs/STs and the Minorities"⁷

The proactive provisions to Dalits comprise of access to free education, free supply of text books and uniforms, scholarships and reservation, meant to compensate for the long history of prohibition and exclusion from education. Reducing the gap between Dalits and other social groups and providing level playing fields and equal opportunities are stated objectives of many of these programmes.

⁶ Annie Namala is Project Coordinator, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.

⁷ Annual Report, 2005-06; Dept. of Elementary Education and Literacy, Dept. of Secondary and Higher Education, Min. of HRD, GoI.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

SSA, initiated in 2001, is the flagship programme and the main vehicle for universalizing elementary education to all children in the 6-14 years age group. The Abhiyan is a partnership between Central and the state governments, which seeks to improve the school system through a community owned approach, with specific focus on the provision of quality education. SSA is a time bound mission, with the objectives of ensuring universalization of primary education by 2007 and elementary education by 2010, bridging all social and gender gaps by 2010. The mission places special focus on education of girls as well as providing flexible education to school less habitation and out of school children through education guarantee schemes and alternate and innovative programmes to ensure that no child will be excluded from education.

Provisions particularly addressed to Dalit children under SSA:

- Focus on girls especially belonging to SC/ST communities and minority groups.
- Free text books for girls, SC/ST students
- Special coaching/remedial classes for girls SC/ST children and a congenial learning environment
- Teachers sensitisation programme to promote equitable learning opportunities
- Community engagement and ownership of the school
- Special focus for innovative projects related to girls education, SC/ST children
- NPEGEL in blocks that have at least 5% SC/ST population and where SC/ST female literacy is below 10% in 1991 census.

Do Dalit children and Parents aspire for education?

The data from the Ministry of HRD, GoI, shows a steady increase in the enrolment rate of Dalit children over the years. The provisional enrolment ratio in 2004-05 is 98.8, an increase of 18 percentage points from 1989-90 which stood at 80.8. The enrolment ratio of Dalit children in primary school during 2004-05 is 115.3⁸. This is corroborated with any discussion of some depth with Dalit children and parents across the country that sees education as the single most opportunity for social mobility, status and a decent livelihood.

However with the rising enrolment is the persistent problem of drop outs. 31.47% from among the 98.8% of Dalit children enrolled in Class 1 drop out by Class V. The drop out rate reaches 52.32% by Class VIII and 62.69% by Class X. 8.17% Dalit children (numbering 3,104,866) in the 6-14 age group are currently estimated to be out of school compared to 3.73% of nonSC/ST/OBC children (numbering 1,848,378)⁹. Side by side with the increasing enrolment is also the persistent problem of out of school children and the widening inequalities between Dalit and 'other' social groups in education both in numbers and in quality. The Ministry admits that reducing the drop outs among Dalits remains a challenge.

Glaring Gaps in Implementation of SSA

⁸ Ministry of HRD, GoI

⁹ Report of Social and Rural Research Institute, 2006

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)¹⁰, assessing SSA, 2004-05 has pointed out glaring gaps in the implementation of the programme. Various aspects of the implementation have come under scrutiny:

- Funds released for the programme by the Ministry and the state governments was far less than the outlays approved by the Project Approval Board.
- Rs.110.30 crores that was a claim to have been reimbursed from foreign donors has not been followed up as on Dec.2005
- 1.36 crores of children (40%) of the 3.40 crore 'out of school children' identified by the programme in April 2001 continued to be out of school in March 31st 2005, despite an expenditure of Rs.11133.57 crores (--% of money being spent).
- While community ownership and involvement were to be the salient difference from previous programmes, the preparatory phase of community involvement, micro-planning was very weak in many states.
- While teacher: Student norm was supposed to be 1:40, it was as high as 1:93 also.
- While the programme promised EGS or A&IE in all school less habitations, even with a small number of 15 eligible children who needed to be brought into the mainstream, 31,648 (9%) of the habitations continued to be without schools.
- Inadequate and delay in supply of text books
- Lack of facilities like compound walls, toilets and water.
- The provisions under A&IE have not been used in many places.

There is no doubt that these have impacted the outcomes of the programme. The biggest gap one finds on the ground is the implementation of the programme as the routine education programmes lacking the spirit of the mission or abhiyan.

Caste based Discrimination does not figure in understanding Out of School Children

The survey by the Social and Rural Research Institute (SRI) in 2006 states the following reasons for children who are never enrolled and those who drop out:

Reasons for non enrolment	%
Cannot afford school	36.1
Child does not like to go to school	16.9
Too young to go to school	14.1
Have to go to work	2.9
Other reasons (parents did not allow, house hold chores, child is disabled..)	30
Reasons for not attending/drop out	
Don't like to go to school	24.4
Cannot afford school	23.9

¹⁰ CAG Report No. 15, 2006

Have to go to work	6.5
Not good at studies	3.1
Have to do household chores	5.2
Other reasons	38.4

Dropping out rate was 54.9% compared to 45.1% of never attended. Teacher beating, school is boring, not able to cope are also given as reasons.

It is interesting to note that while the large majority of out of school children come from Muslim minorities, Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe communities, specific reasons related to their social exclusion, discrimination or untouchability experiences do not figure in the survey findings, quite contrary to studies and reports from Dalit activists and organisations.

Experiences of Caste based discrimination in schooling

A study of 263 children from Scheduled Caste, tribe and Muslim minority communities across 25 districts in 8 states by Solidarity Group for Children Against Discrimination and Exclusion (sg4CADE)¹¹ brought out various discriminatory and humiliating experiences of children from these communities. The broad areas reported by the children are:

- 22.5% children reported difficulty including harassment and prohibition from dominant communities on the way to reach schools.
- 25% reported that teachers do not allow them into the class if they are late.
- 40% said that teachers and other students do not help them find a seat in the class, when they are late.
- 61% said that they do not have the freedom to sit anywhere in the class.
- 21% felt that the teachers neglect them, do not ask them to solve questions on the board. There is also a strong perception that teachers favour dominant caste children.
- 48% reported that teachers punish them more than they do the dominant caste children
- 24% said they were humiliated by their peer group while 15% reported being called derogatorily by caste names.

The data demands recognising and addressing the caste based exclusion and discrimination experienced by Dalit and other marginalised children and the need to address them for universalisation of education and retention of excluded children in schools. What is also important to note is that excluded children are in fact actively prevented and prohibited by the caste system and dominant caste members in accessing their rights and entitlements.

A survey¹² of Out of school children in 193 tolas across 7 districts of Bihar identified 11,477 out of school children, the large majority of them being Dalits; with some tolas having more than 100 out of school children.

¹¹ Sg4CADE is a National Platform of NGOs and movements working with children among disadvantaged communities. The study was conducted in August 2006.

¹² Study by IIDS and Dalit Samanway in 2006

The study came across a Dalit youth in Bihar, the first graduate in his village having to close down a small private school he had initiated in his village, because the Yadav youth who had a school nearby demanded it. He was wasting his time in the village.

Marginalised parents excluded from the schooling process

“Wear a nice saree and oil your hair before you come for the meeting” was the instructions of a young boy to his grandmother for a meeting with school committee. While the low participation and initiative of their parents are often attributed to their lack of interest, motivation and knowledge, it is also important to understand the barriers that prevent their participation. A sure way for pushing out a child from school was found to be the humiliation and perceived insults to their parents when they came to school. The children are already sensitive to the disabilities of their parents in participating in school related processes and even prevent and protect their parents from having to come to school. When they do have to bring them, any untoward treatment usually ends in their leaving the school.

Dalit children in Gujarat said that they see no point in reporting discrimination and harassment in school to their parents because of the perception that the parents are helpless to do anything about it. A girl in Panipat, Haryana said that she dropped out of school in 8th standard after her father was beaten up by the teachers and village people when he objected to harassment of Dalit children in the school.

One is also struck by the diametrically opposite views held by excluded parents and teachers regarding education of their children. The parents express high concern for their children’s schooling while teachers perceive the parents as being disinterested, even anti to the development of the child, concerned only about short term economic gains. I was struck by a parent who was visibly distressed that her daughter dropped out of school despite the many provisions of free books and scholarship from the government, while her daughter maintained a stubborn silence.

While SSA is built around the cornerstone of community participation, this is a very weak link in the process, and further one needs to recognise that the particular situation of excluded parents need specific strategies for their participation and contribution in the process. There is no substitute to getting the parents engaged in the schooling of their children, and who else but the parents of those children who are the majority out of school.

Way forward

Address caste based discrimination in schooling: There is no escaping the fact that schooling at most times are not happy memories for Dalit children. While a number of studies highlight the issue, the state institutions and mechanisms are yet to acknowledge and address this. It becomes important to institutionalise orientation and sensitisation of all teachers and functionaries on caste based discrimination and bring about changes in the way they perceive and behave towards Dalit children. In this whole process it is also important that we develop our understanding and strategies from Dalit children, parents and community leaders. This should also ensure healthy debates and dialogue between Dalit and non-Dalit children so that respect for each other and comradeship can be built up. Inclusive education and equitable terms of inclusion needs to be developed in all aspects of schooling.

Set up mechanisms for addressing complaints on discrimination: A young girl in a private school said that when the head of the institution reprimanded her teacher for discriminating her based on her

complaint, she was being further harassed. Hence it is important that mechanisms like the mandatory committee to address workplace sexual harassment, we also need to mandatorily set up committees within the educational institutions to address caste based discrimination and harassment.

Engage parents and treat them with respect: The current stand off between Dalit parents and teachers need to be addressed. The VECs set up at present does not serve this process as the parents committee in most places do not represent the issues of Dalit children, Dalit representatives in the committee are too small in number to assert their knowledge or suggestions for improving attendance and retention. There is the need to encourage schools to have larger meetings of the parents, with SHGs and other representatives from the communities to facilitate community ownership and strategies to strengthen the system.

Ensure respectful and dignified portrayal of Dalit culture and experience in text books: While different social groups are vying with each other to portray society from their dominant status, there is very little in the text books and curriculum on Dalit culture and contribution to the nation. The life story of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and other local Dalit leaders would be a beginning here.

Promote opportunities for building up aspirations and role models among Dalit children: As aspirations shape themselves from ones experiences and others expectations, the aspirations levels of Dalit children are seen to be low. There is also a lack of role models, lack of opportunities to interact with outside influential persons, very limited exposure to possibilities and options, all of which result in low aspirations and performances. SSA should recognise this fact and develop additional modules to expose Dalit children to a wide variety of options and opportunities, opportunities to engage with influential personalities etc to build bigger aspirations among them.

During a recent visit to Kancheepuram district in Tamil Nadu, I was pleasantly surprised to find that all children were enrolled in schools and completed the minimum of primary schooling. However, most children perceived the opportunities before them as completing XII standard and gaining an employment in the local garment industry or other small companies earning Rs.2500-3000 per month.

Locate EGS and A&IE centres in Dalit habitation and engage Dalit youth to run them on priority basis: One observes that Dalit habitations are given the least priority in building up public infrastructure and institutions by the state. Hence while the malnutrition and infant mortality rate among Dalit children are higher than that of other social groups, one inevitably finds ICDS centres located in the dominant habitations and also under utilised. While the majority of excluded children continue to be out of school, rather than talking about locating the institutions within their habitations, we are talking of reducing the distance of schools from them. It is also interesting that the EGS and A&IE components have been weakly implemented. One does not also know how many of these are located in the excluded habitations. Locating them is a way of greater attendance, retention and community ownership which are key to achieving SSA goals.

The CAG report shows that the engagement of NGOs in the programme has steadily declined over the past four years. NGOs/CBOs lead by Dalit youth who have in-depth understanding of issues, have greater rapport with the community find it hard to participate in the programme, do not get the resources to set up centres or alternate programmes in their habitation. This has to be reversed with a strong

engagement of the youth from the community to achieve universalization of elementary schooling among Dalits.

Make education absolutely free: Tilak 2000, estimated that an Scheduled Caste household spends around Rs.303/- per student per annum at elementary stage in government schools. The expenditure is marginally higher in government aided schools (Rs.325/) and significantly so in Private unaided schools (Rs.757/-) making such education out of reach for the majority of SC children. While free education has been stated, various hidden costs in education needs to be done away with to make it absolutely free and accessible to even the poorest child in India.

To Conclude

One can decipher dilemma and dichotomy in the way, the country addresses caste based exclusion and discrimination. While Constitutional provisions, thanks to Babasaheb Ambedkar are clearly mandated, the same does not get carried forward clearly and consistently in the design and implementation of programmes. An example is the National Plan of Action for Children 2005 which has complete sections on girl children, children in difficult circumstances, child trafficking, child labour, child participation, sexual exploitation and child pornography; one is disappointed that there is no analysis of the caste structure and its impact on the large majority of the disadvantaged children. In fact the above disabilities also have caste implications that are not brought in to understand or address the issues.

The CAG report underlines the need to implement the programme in earnest, by increased commitment of all institutions and people responsible. This article has tried to look at the additional concerns and gaps, outlining possible strategies for SSA to ensure that Dalit children can enjoy and attain universal education in our country. Undermining the effect and impact of caste based exclusion and discrimination, excluding Dalit organisations, activists and parents in grounding the SSA and not grounding positive terms of inclusion for Dalit children is no way to achieve the goals of SSA.

Are Dalits Getting the Resources Due to Them?

By the Centre for Budgets & Governance Accountability (CBGA)

According to Census 2001, the Scheduled Castes constitute 16.2% of the total population of India. However, this social group has historically suffered from caste and untouchability based exclusion and discrimination. In spite of decades of planning and a sizeable amount of public resources being channeled in the name of welfare of SCs, actual benefits have hardly reached these groups. In relation to all major socio-economic indicators (such as, access to income generating assets, poverty, employment, education, health etc.) they have been far below the national average.

Recognizing this fact, the Government of India under the directive of the then Prime Minister, Ms. Indira Gandhi, formulated the Special Component Plan (SCP) (now being renamed as - Scheduled Caste Sub Plan or SCSP) during the 6th Five Year Plan, in the year 1979. The SCP for SCs expected “to facilitate easy convergence and pooling of resources from all the other development sectors in proportion to the population of SCs and monitoring of various development programmes for the benefit of SCs”. This strategy was made mandatory for all the State governments’ departments as well as Central Government ministries.

The SCSP is not meant to be an isolated programme / scheme. Instead it’s purpose was to serve as an umbrella strategy for overall development of Scheduled Castes. The strategy entails the targeted flow of funds and associated benefits from the Annual Plan of States/ Union Territories, at least in proportion to the Scheduled Caste population in total population of the States/ Union Territories.

While the central objective of the SCP is the economic development of Scheduled Castes, it also intends to promote their educational and social development along with the fulfillment of their minimum needs and human resources development. The objective of SCP is to ensure that not only are sufficient funds allocated for the welfare of Dalits, but also that the funds are properly used and that effective and practical programmes with clear goals and targets are initiated.

Key Components of the SCP¹³

The main elements of SCP are the following:

1. Out of the total plan outlay, funds allocated for the welfare of Dalits should be at least as much as the percentage of their population representation in the particular state.
2. Every department of the state government should initiate concrete steps to evolve separate programmes, in accordance with specific needs and priorities of Dalits, under the SCP. Notional allocations under SCP (especially in sectors like Power, Irrigation, Education, and Health) need to be avoided.

¹³ This part of the paper has been drawn from **Social Watch - Tamil Nadu** (2004), “Special Component Plan: Dalit Hopes Betrayed?” *Second (Revised) Edition*, Chennai, July 2004.

3. Only those programmes specially meant for Dalits and the percentage amount of funds allocated, as per specific Government Orders, can be included in the SCP.
4. Separate budget heads have to be shown in the “Plan-Budget Link” Book clearly mentioning the receipts and expenditures details of the SCP (in order to prevent diversion, underutilization and mis-utilization of funds earmarked for Dalits).
5. The Department concerned with Dalit Welfare in the State should act as the Nodal Agency for the formulation and implementation of SCP in the state.

The three important instruments devised as vehicles for the implementation of the SCP strategy are:

1. The SCP of the states and central ministries: the targets fixed under SCP are disaggregated into district-wise and sector-wise targets. At the district level, the district collectors are responsible for coordinating the implementation of the schemes under SCP.
2. The Special Central Assistance (SCA) for the SCPs of the States: SCA is given as 100% grant by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to various States, to make up for any deficiency towards the implementation of the SCP in the respective State.
3. Scheduled castes Development Corporations (SCDCs) in the States or the State Departments, which will play the role of Nodal Agencies, in the implementation of SCP in the States.

Nature of Allocations

The allocations for SCs fall under two categories:

1. Actual Allocations: This refers to allocations for SCs under those schemes, which are either meant exclusively for SCs or those in which there are clear guidelines/instructions regarding the proportion of SC beneficiaries being a certain minimum level within the total beneficiaries of the scheme.
2. Notional Allocations: In contrast to Actual Allocations for SCs, Notional Allocations for SCs refer to allocations that are shown by the Government Ministry/ Department as directly benefiting the SCs from within the total allocations for a Scheme. These benefits, even if they really reach the SCs in the proportions shown by the Ministry/Department, are at best incidental benefits derived by SCs, for which there were no binding policy guidelines or instructions within the scheme.

Implementation of SCP: Disturbing Evidences

Although the evolution of the SCP dates back to the 6th Five Year Plan, evidences from the States (such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh), where civil society groups have been tracking the implementation of SCP in the State Budgets present a disturbing picture. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been regularly pressurizing the States to ensure adequate allocations under SCSP. As an incentive, 25% of the Special Central Assistance is released to States/ UTs on the basis of percentage allocation made by them under SCSP as compared to share of SC's in their total population.

According to the report of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the performance of States such as Bihar, Haryana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh in earmarking allocations under the

SCSP has been good. However, other States/ UTs do not provide a satisfactory picture on the earmarking of allocations under SCSP for the development of SCs.

Moreover, the details of the total State plan Outlay, flow to SCSP as reported by States/ UTs for the first three years of the 10th Plan shows that the percentage of allocation under SCSP in the first three years of the 10th Plan has not been corresponding with the 16.23% share of the SC in the total population.

Table 1 - Total State Plan Outlay, Flow to SCSP as Reported by States/ UTs

Year	Total State Plan Outlay (Rs. in Crore)	SCSP Outlay	% of SCSP Outlay to State Plan Outlay
2002-2003	88591.83	10177.54	11.49
2003-2004	85757.97	10373.95	12.10
2004-2005	95518.76	12057.43	12.62

Background Note: Working Group for the formulation of Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)

Schemes for Welfare and development of Scheduled Castes

Table 2 - Schemes exclusively meant for welfare of SCs

Department / Ministry	Scheme	Plan Allocation for the Scheme in 2006-07 (Rs. Crore)	Plan Allocation Earmarked for SCs (Rs. Crore)
Department. of Science & Technology	Special Component Plan for the Development of SCs	2.5	2.5
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment	Special Central Assistance for Scheduled Castes Component Plan	440.12	440.12
	Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme	440	440
	Machinery for implementation of Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989	36.91	36.91
	Girls Hostels	32	32
	Boys Hostels	28	28
	Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SCs	16	16
	Assistance to Voluntary Organisations for Welfare of Scheduled Castes	30	30
	Other Programmes for Welfare of Scheduled Castes	47.85	47.85
	Common Programmes for Scheduled Castes	5.8	5.8
	National SC Finance and Development Corporation	37	37
	State Scheduled Caste Development Corporations	33	33
	National Safai Karmachari Finance and Development Corporation	80	80
		1226.68	1226.68

Source: Statement 21, Expenditure Budget Vol. I, Union Budget 2006-07

Plan Allocations Earmarked for SCs by Central Government Ministries in 2006-07

Table 3 clearly shows that the allocations have been extremely low with regard to allocations by other Ministries/Departments. Only some of the beneficiary-oriented Ministries (e.g. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Ministry of Rural Development, and Department of Science and Technology) have shown Plan allocations clearly earmarked for SCs.

Table 3 - Status of Implementation of SCP for SCs by Central Government Departments / Ministries (having Actual or Notional Plan Allocations for SCs) in 2006-07

Department/ Ministry	Total Plan Allocation for the Dept./ Ministry in 2006-07 (Rs. Crore)	Plan Allocation Earmarked for SCs (Rs. Crore)	Proportion of Total Plan Allocation of the Dept. Earmarked for SCs (in %)
Dept. of Science & Technology	1340	2.5	0.17
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment	1750	1226.68	70.1
Department of Rural Development	24025.62	2286	9.51
Ministry of Labour & Employment	311.36	0.53	0.17
Dept. of Women & Child Development	4795.85	635	13.2
Dept. of Secondary Education & Higher Education (Ministry of HRD)	3616	371.2	5.9
Dept. of Elementary Education & Literacy (Ministry of HRD)	17128	2493.5	14.6
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports	600	16.45	2.74

However, in case of all of the above mentioned Ministries except for Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the proportion of Plan allocations for SCs is less than 16 %. Moreover, in case of some of these Ministries, the allocations are only notional allocations, where incidental benefits to SCs from the regular schemes of the Ministry have been assumed without any concrete data on actual beneficiaries.

We find that almost all of the schemes, under which there are clearly earmarked allocations for SCs, following the conventional approach of placation instead of actual empowerment of SCs. The mainstream Ministries, which are benefiting most from the current trajectory of economic growth in the country, have not been showing any allocations clearly earmarked for SCs. One of the main arguments put forward in this respect is that their schemes/ services are indivisible. And, therefore, it is not feasible for such mainstream Ministries to implement SCP for SCs.

The most disappointing fact is that in most of the crucial sectors, which are very important from the point of view of economic empowerment such as Department of Agricultural Research and Cooperation, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department of Road Transport and Highways, there are absolutely no concrete schemes for inclusion of SCs. They don't even have notional allocations for SCs, set aside the actual allocations.

Table 4 - Status of Implementation of SCP for SC's by the Central Govt. in 2006-07

Total Plan Allocations by All Departments/Ministries of the Central Govt. in 2006-07	Plan Allocations Earmarked for SCs by all Departments/ Ministries in 2006-07	Proportion of Total Plan Allocation of the Central Govt. Earmarked for SCs in 2006-07
Rs. 1,65,499 crore	Rs. 7,031.86 crore	4.25 %

In totality, we find that only four Ministries/Departments in the Central Government (including the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment) have some small amounts of Plan allocations earmarked for SCs, while three other Departments have some amount of notional Plan allocations earmarked for SCs. The proportions of these Plan allocations earmarked for SCs are far below the proportion of SC population in total population of the country, i.e. roughly 16 %, which is in violation of the strategy of SCP for SCs. Thus, there should not be any doubts as to why the SCs have been excluded from the growth process. We must recognize that empowerment of SCs requires that they get their due share in economic growth and wealth creation.

The approach towards development of SCs needs to be an Entitlement-based and Rights-based approach rather than that of charity or placation. In this regard, a comprehensive review of the existing approach, strategies, priorities of the ongoing policies and programmes and their implementation for the development and empowerment of SCs is required on an urgent basis.