

## Achieving MDGs: Orissa remains behind other states

**Bhubaneswar:** Speakers at a state level symposium on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were unanimous in their opinion that Orissa still had a lot of catching up to do with other states of the country as far as the achievement of these goals was concerned.

The symposium on 'The Halfway Mark and State of Realization of MDGs in Orissa' was organized at the Idcol Auditorium here on Saturday last by the 'Katha Rakhibaa Sarakar' (KRS) Campaign, a state level initiative on MDGs launched by a group of NGOs and INGOs, to mark the halfway on the road to the realization of the 8 MDGs, which 189 nations of the world committed to achieve by 2015 at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000.

Most speakers at the symposium said Orissa's record in respect of most of the MDGs - reduction of poverty, reining in child and maternal mortality rates, universal primary education, the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases etc has been very poor and called for redoubling of efforts to make up for lost time.

The symposium was divided into two technical sessions; the first chaired by eminent economist Prof Baidyanath Mishra and the second by noted educationist Dr Karunakar Patnaik. The speakers included Prof. Radhamohan, State Information Commissioner, Shadrok Omol, state representative, UNICEF - Orissa, Dr D Narendra Kumar, UNFPA, Dr Dillip Chhotray, Gitanjali Jena, CYSD, Tapan Kumar Padhi, RCDC and Bharat Bhusan Thakur, Ekta Parishad. Four presentations on poverty alleviation, land rights, safe drinking water and basic sanitation and HIV/AIDS - the focus areas in the KRS Campaign - were made in the first session by representatives from CYSD, Ekta Parishad, RCDC and Concern Worldwide respectively.

A mock Yuva Bidhansabha (Youth Assembly) was also organized involving more than 90 youth across the state by Orissa Suchana Adhikar Manch in between to sensitize on the progress of MDGs implementation trend in Orissa.

A set of recommendations was approved at the end of the day-long deliberations. Among other things, the recommendations called for redefinition of BPL criteria in the state, strengthening of gram panchayats, prioritization of the agriculture and animal husbandry sector, strict implementation of minimum support price (MSP) in respect of agricultural and forest products, making TDCC more effective, increase in HIV/AIDS surveillance sites and setting up of a dynamic information system for monitoring drinking water coverage, quality and maintenance.

A commemorative volume 'The Halfway Mark & State of Realization of MDGs in Orissa' was released on the occasion. The document has articles by eminent academicians and experts in their respective fields. An Oriya awareness booklet named 'Daridrya Atitara Katha Heu' (Make Poverty History) was also released in the symposium.

Earlier, KRS Campaign coordinator Tapan Kumar Padhi and campaign manager Shyamal Kishore Das traced the circumstances under which the Campaign was born and outlined a future course of action for it. Though the campaign would work for the fulfillment of all the 8 MDGs, it would focus particularly on four areas- poverty alleviation, land rights, safe drinking water and basic sanitation and HIV/AIDS in the state, Das said.

Manisha Majumdar of the Concern Worldwide called upon civil society organizations, academicians, the media and individuals to join the campaign to make it a success. Nirjharini Rath, assistant campaign manager proposed a vote of thanks.