

Millennium Development Goals & Dalits

-The Missing Dimension

SOCIAL WATCH - TAMILNADU

"Social Watch Tamilnadu" is a State-level Resource Centre in the Southern State of Tamilnadu, India. It is the outcome of the 8 years' experiences of the Tamilnadu Peoples' Forum for Social Development.

Over the last 8 years (1995-2003), Tamilnadu Peoples' Forum for Social Development has established itself as a credible initiative in the field of Public Policy Monitoring, and especially in Budget monitoring and advocacy. The Forum had taken up series of initiatives to ensure that the basic concerns of the marginalised of the State - dalits, tribals, women, children, small fisherfolk and unorganised labour determine the social policy framework of the Tamilnadu Government. Its various Budget Critiques, its Tamilnadu Social Development Report 2000 and other research publications have been very well received from different quarters.

"Social Watch Tamilnadu", the new Resource Centre is intended to take forward the work of the Forum with greater intensity and professional competence and expertise. Monitoring and lobbying for changes in the public social policy of the Tamilnadu Government and its Budgets, based on the socio-economic and livelihood rights of the marginalised of Tamilnadu remains the continuing search and goal of "Social Watch Tamilnadu".

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“Fifty years into our life in the republic we find that justice – social, economic and political – remains an unrealized dream for millions of our fellow-citizens. The benefits of our economic growth are yet to reach them. We have one of the world’s largest reservoirs of technical personnel, but also the largest number of people below the poverty line, and the largest number of children suffering from malnutrition. Our giant factories rise from out of squalor; our satellites shoot up from the midst of the hovels of the poor...”

“Tragically, the growth in our economy has not been uniform. It has been accompanied by great regional and social inequalities. ... Dalits and tribals are the worst affected by this...

One half of our society guzzles aerated beverages while the other has to make do with palmfuls of muddied water. **Our three-way fast lane of liberalization, privatization and globalization must provide safe pedestrian crossings for the unempowered India also, so that it too can move towards equality of status and opportunity....”**

**- K.R.Narayanan, President’s address to the nation,
Eve of Republic day, 25 January 2000**

The struggle of dalits in India and elsewhere, for their rightful share in the benefits of development, keeps moving forward, along with their struggle for human dignity and equality.

As the struggle takes various forms and shapes, it becomes crucial for dalits to grab any space that is provided at any level or sphere of socio-economic and politico-cultural empowerment – and, in the process, taking their local, national and international struggles forward.

The present debate and processes around the Millennium Development Campaign provides one such opportunity and space.

The National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) India requested Manu Alphonse, the director of “Social watch – Tamilnadu”, to take up, on its behalf, activities of research and advocacy towards highlighting dalit concerns in the overall debate and campaign around the Millennium Development Goals.

This dossier is an effort to flag off the basic concerns and perspectives in the effort to link Millennium Development Campaign with dalit concerns. The dossier is being released as a help for further discussion and debate on the theme. Your critical reactions to the dossier are welcome.

Chennai, India
22.11.2004

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Millennium Development Goals & Dalits - The Missing Dimension

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MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Goal 1. Eradicate extreme Poverty and Hunger

Goal 2. Achieve Universal Primary Education

Goal 3. Promote Gender Equality and empower Women

Goal 4. Reduce Child Mortality

Goal 5. Improve Maternal Health

Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases

Goal 7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Goal 8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development

MDGs – THE GLOBAL SCENE

As the first decade of the 21st Century unfolds, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Millennium Campaign around the Goals are gaining the centre stage in the development debate of United Nations, Governments and international development agencies.

Born out of the Millennium Declaration, adopted by 189 Governments at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, MDGs (the 8 Goals, along with the subsequently worked-out 18 Targets and 48 Indicators) have led to a Millennium Development Compact among the nations, intended to provide new motivation and focus in the fight against poverty and hunger, illiteracy, disease, gender inequality and environmental degradation as well as the limitations in the field of international aid and development cooperation.

THE ONGOING DEBATE ON MDGs

Ever since the formulation of the MDGs, they have been the subject of a serious debate, relating to the very relevance and significance of the MDGs.

On the positive side, the MDGs have been portrayed as ‘**a development manifesto for ordinary citizens around the world: time-bound, measurable, pocketbook issues that they can easily understand – and more important, with adequate data, the Goals seek to hold their governments and the international community accountable for their achievement**’

The advocates and proponents of MDGs have claimed, “The MDGs address many of the most enduring failures of human development. Unlike the objectives of the first, second and third UN Development Decades (1960s, 1970s, 1980s), which mostly focused on economic growth, the Goals place human well-being and poverty reduction at the center of global development objectives...”

GOAL 1. ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day

Indicators

1. Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day (World Bank)
2. Poverty gap ratio [incidence x depth of poverty] (World Bank)
3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption (World Bank)

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

Indicators

4. Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age (UNICEF-WHO)
5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption (FAO)

GOAL 2. ACHIEVE 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

Indicators

6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education (UNESCO)
7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 (UNESCO)
8. Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds (UNESCO)

They have gone even to the extent of linking MDGs with human development and human rights: “The Goals provide building blocks for human development, with each relating to key dimensions – participation, democracy and human rights – of this process. The Goals also reflect a human rights agenda – rights to food, education, health care and decent living standards, as enumerated in the UDHR. The need to ensure all these rights – economic, social and cultural – confers obligations on the governments of countries, both rich and poor.”

On the other hand, the MDGs have invited quite a few critical comments. The Human Development Report 2003 of UNDP (which was a special Report centering around the MDGs) summed up possible criticisms as follows:

- Being too narrow, leaving out development priorities such as strong governance, increased employment, reproductive health care and institutional reform of global governance.
- Relying on narrow indicators – such as school enrolment gaps to track progress in gender equality, or numbers of telephones to measure access to technology
- Being unrealistic and setting the stage for discouragement – and for being used to name and shame countries that do not achieve them
- Distorting national priorities, possibly undermining local leadership by promoting a top-down, often donor-led agenda at the cost of participatory approaches in which communities and countries set their own priorities

The criticisms from civil society organisations have been more scathing. Focus on the Global South has raised a pregnant question: “MDGs – Anti Poverty or Anti Poor?”

The Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum, in its October 2003 Statement, based on its analysis of Goal 1 of MDGs, made the following pertinent observations:

“The MDGs sideline the critical and important issue of Human Rights. Certain norms are particularly pertinent in addressing the problem of poverty, such as effective non-discrimination, the recognition of vulnerable groups, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to freedom from hunger, the right to economic self-determination and the right to development”

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

Indicators

9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education (UNESCO)
10. Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old (UNESCO)
11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (ILO)
12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (IPU)

GOAL 4. REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

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

Indicators

13. Under-five mortality rate (UNICEF-WHO)
14. Infant mortality rate (UNICEF-WHO)
15. Proportion of 1 year-old children immunized against measles (UNICEF-WHO)

GOAL 5. IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

Target 6. Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

Indicators

16. Maternal mortality ratio (UNICEF-WHO)
17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (UNICEF-WHO)

“The MDG itself formulates the problem of poverty too narrowly in terms of vision, scope and direction...”

“The current process of formulating and implementing poverty reduction policies has not been successful in tackling the roots of poverty. This is due to the fact that the poor themselves are excluded in the whole process.”

“... Externally imposed one-size-fits-all policies such as the way the current PRSP initiative of the World Bank and the IMF is being practiced are to be rejected”

“The international economic structure is inequitable and currently antagonistic to the achievement of the MDGs themselves”

MDGs AT THE CROSSROADS OF TWIN STREAMS OF U.N.

A pragmatic approach to the MDGs, based on a critical assessment of the issues involved, demands situating the emergence of MDGs as the culmination of a historical process.

At the global, especially at the United Nations, level, there have been two historical processes at work – two streams, simultaneous, though often contradictory. In the ongoing debate today on MDGs, one can easily perceive the criss-crossing of these two streams of thinking and processes.

The first process centers around the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Starting way back in 1962 with the promulgation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the coming to the prominence of collective dimensions of human rights of marginalized communities, the Governments of the world have been led to signing and ratifying a series of International Covenants, relating to livelihood rights of human communities, going beyond the earlier exclusively individual-oriented understanding of human rights. The series of Global summits over the 1990s (Beijing, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Johannesburg...) have helped to further sharpen the insights in the field of Rights to food, housing, water and sanitation, education, health, gender equality and social-cum-sustainable development.

GOAL 6. COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

Target 7 Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Indicators

18. HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years (UNAIDS-WHO-UNICEF)

19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate (UN Population Division)

19a. Condom use at last high-risk sex (UNICEF-WHO)

19b. Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS (UNICEF-WHO)

19c. Contraceptive prevalence rate (UN Population Division)

20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years (UNICEF-UNAIDS-WHO)

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

Indicators

21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria (WHO)

22. Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures (UNICEF-WHO)

23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis (WHO)

24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under DOTS (internationally recommended TB control strategy) (WHO)

The other stream lies in the sphere of the Breton Woods institutions, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. These, with their destructive neo-liberal thrusts and programmes, have been imposing on developing countries their own perspectives on areas such as poverty eradication, debt and trade. In their development strategies, especially for low-income and heavily indebted countries, the World Bank and the IMF have reformulated their original Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and Poverty Reduction and Growth framework (PRGF). And today, donors as well as most multilateral agencies use PRSP-PRGF as major guidelines in their approach to national development in low-income highly indebted countries.

And, more important, the policies and economic strategies promoted by the World Bank, IMF and WTO today often contradict important UN Conventions on development and human rights, and undermine the UN's commitment to the MDGs. Even the UN Sub Commission on Human Rights has noted that the policy conditions attached to World Bank-IMF debt relief and PRSP-PRGF programmes undermine the policy sovereignty of developing countries and obstruct developing countries from meeting their human rights obligations to their citizens.

The discussion paper of the 2003 Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum clearly articulates this basic inherent contradiction of the MDGs:

“Although UN agencies and programmes play focal roles in promoting and implementing the MDGs, the global trade and finance regimes are beyond their control or influence. But rather than push for reforms to make these regimes subservient to development and human rights goals, the UN system has moved towards reforming its own approaches to make them coherent with IFI policies. For example, UNDP and the World Bank have entered into a joint partnership to implement the MDGs, thus closing off critical examination of the role of World Bank and IMF in creating poverty through their structural adjustment programmes.”

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

Indicators

25. Proportion of land area covered by forest (FAO)
26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area (UNEP-WCMC)
27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per \$1 GDP (PPP) (IEA, WB)
28. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita (UNFCCC, UNSD) and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs (ODP tons) (UNEP)
29. Proportion of population using solid fuels (WHO)

Target 10. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

Indicators

30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural (UNICEF-WHO)
31. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural (UNICEF-WHO)

Target 11. By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Indicators

32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure (UN-HABITAT)

LIVELIHOOD RIGHTS APPROACH TO MDGs, THE ANSWER

Given such an ambivalent nature of the processes around the MDGs, it is crucial that civil society organizations, working with MDGs, including the Millennium Development Campaign, position their work on MDGs squarely on the matrix of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), as articulated by the various International Human Rights Conventions.

Such a human rights approach should lead to **the developing of livelihood rights-based indicators and benchmarks** to monitor and ensure the implementation of the livelihood rights vis-à-vis each of the Millennium Development Goals, targets and indicators.

Such an approach would also ensure the rigorous implementation of human rights principles and instruments to ensure that national and international **trade, investment and debt policies and agreements are designed with respect to the livelihood rights of communities, especially of the marginalised.**

And, most of all, such an approach would take into account **specific perspectives of gender, class, race and caste.**

Finally it will ensure **the active participation of the marginalized sections** in all spheres of implementation of the MDGs, leading to the empowerment of such communities.

Given such an approach, the civil society forums and the International as well as national campaigns need to seriously engage with those sections of the UN system that are charged with monitoring and campaigning for the implementation of the MDGs.

It is critical that civil society organizations engage in the monitoring work for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, of the UN treaty bodies and Special Rapporteurs, aimed at ensuring consistency of the MDG implementation process with the existing State obligations from the treaties they have ratified.

GOAL 8. DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

(Indicators for targets 12-15 are given below in a combined list.)

Target 12. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.

(Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction - both nationally and internationally)

Target 13. Address the special needs of the least developed countries.

(Includes: tariff and quota-free access for least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction)

Target 14. Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)

Target 15. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

PROGRESS OF MDGs – SPECIFIC SECTIONS EXCLUDED

The 2003 Human Development Report of UNDP provides a sort of a semi-mid-term review of the progress of the implementation of MDGs by various countries. And the major point that emerges from the review is the fact that even in successful cases of MDGs implementation, certain groups have been excluded or left behind. The groups, so excluded or left behind, have been identified as women, ethnic and racial minorities and rural inhabitants.

“Many countries with national averages indicating adequate progress towards the Goals by the target dates have deep pockets of entrenched poverty”

“When measuring progress, it is vital to look beyond country averages. In many countries the letter of the Goals may be achieved if efforts focus on people already doing the best in society. But the spirit of the Goals is not met if countries that cross the finishing line leave behind many poor people. **In Brazil, China, India and Mexico overall progress has been excellent. But some areas and groups are not benefiting enough, while wealthy segments of the population continue to surge ahead...**”

“Wide – and widening – gaps are cause for concern because of their likely negative effects on the pace of development. They also indicate uneven opportunities, with powerful people securing more of the benefits of development.”

“The data on wealth gaps in health and education support an undeniable conclusion: for the Goals to be met by as many countries and people as possible, policies should focus on closing the wealth divides within countries.”

Indicators

Official Development Assistance (ODA)

33. Net ODA, total and to LDCs, as percentage of OECD / Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors’ gross national income (GNI)(OECD)
34. Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation) (OECD)
35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is untied (OECD)
36. ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their GNIs (OECD)
37. ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their GNIs (OECD)

Market access

38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and from LDCs, admitted free of duty (UNCTAD, WTO, WB)
39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries (UNCTAD, WTO, WB)
40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as percentage of their GDP (OECD)
41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity (OECD, WTO)

Debt sustainability

42. Total number of countries that have reached their Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) (IMF - World Bank)
43. Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative (IMF-WB)
44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services (IMF-WB)

DISAGGREGATED DATA AND TARGETED POLICY INITIATIVES

The above realization has led countries around the world to go beyond national averages and go in for more focused policy orientations and budget allocations.

This effort has also led many Governments to generate data - disaggregated along gender, ethnic, age, race, geographic or other lines, enabling deeper analysis of country-specific causes of inequality and poverty – and sometimes revealing systemic discrimination and serious deprivations. Among the best of such focused approaches are the following:

- Since 1997 Brazil has calculated the human development index (HDI) annually for each of its more than 5000 municipalities...
- Nepal has been able to generate extensive disaggregated data regarding the most disadvantaged castes in the country, vis-à-vis other sections
- Egypt has disaggregated socio-economic, environmental, demographic and other indicators for each of the nation's 26 governorates...
- Namibia has disaggregated the human development index across language groups.

Such a disaggregated approach to data generation and data collection has contributed, in these countries, to changed policy strategies for advancing, and developing tools for measuring, progress on human development as well as towards targeted investments in health, education and job creation.

Target 16. In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

Indicators

45. Unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 years, each sex and total (ILO)

Target 17. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries

Indicators

46. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis (WHO)

Target 18. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

Indicators

47. Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population (ITU)
48. Personal computers in use per 100 population and Internet users per 100 population (ITU)

MDGs AND INDIA

The previous BJP right-wing Government had taken the stand that the MDGs have no relevance for India, and hence there was no effort in the Parliament or elsewhere towards a debate on the MDGs. It was claimed that the goals set by the Planning Commission are more ambitious and more relevant to the country.

The **Planning Commission of India**, in its Tenth Five Year Plan document, has outlined India's human development goals and targets for the next 10 years. Among the major monitorable targets set for the Tenth plan are the following:

- Reduction of poverty by 5% by 2007 and by 15 % by 2012
- All children in school by 2003; all children to complete 5 years of schooling by 2007
- Reduction in gender gaps in literacy and wage rates by at least 50% by 2007
- Increase in literacy rates to 75% within the Tenth Plan Period (2007)
- Reduction of infant mortality rate to 45 per 1000 live births by 2007 and to 28 by 2012
- Reduction of maternal mortality rate to 2 per 1000 live births by 2007 and to 1 by 2012
- All villages to have sustained access to potable drinking water by Plan period...

UNDP, in its Country Programme Outline for India (2003-2007), makes the following statement:

“India is on track with regard to achievement of the MDGs, yet the challenges for human development remain formidable. Regional and inter-state disparities are increasing. There is a growing public consensus on the need for proactive measures to tackle the situation of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups...”

And UNDP, based on its Country Cooperation Framework, has proposed 4 thematic areas as central to its own proposed programme in India:

- Promotion of human development and gender equality
- Capacity-building for decentralization
- Poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods
- Vulnerability reduction and environmental sustainability

The **World Bank New Delhi office** hosted a workshop on “Millennium Development Goals in India: Role of Public Policy and Service Delivery”, in June 2004.

The objective of this conference was “to provide national and international perspectives on the challenges facing India's attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.”

The conference featured the presentation of a recent World Bank Report entitled “Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in India” and showcased the vision of the country's key policy makers for attaining these goals. The conference also provided a glimpse of the 10th Plan roadmap to achieving the MDGs, an overview of the United Nations' support to these goals, and views of key policymakers in this area. Concrete examples of policy interventions for achieving the MDGs in India were discussed through case studies.

The choice of the case studies presented at the Conference is indeed revealing, as seen by the following list:

- “The Health Minister's Decision: How Best to Reduce Maternal Mortality”
- “Bollywood, Television and Same Language Subtitling, A Panacea or Sugar Pill for India's Massive Literacy Challenge”
- “Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project”
- “The Learning Guarantee Program in North-East Karnataka”
- “Access to Medicine Initiatives in Tamilnadu”
- “Computer Assisted Learning Centres in Karnataka”
- “Mahila Samakhya”
- “Mid-day meal Schemes in Tamilnadu and Gujarat”

The **Common Minimum Programme** of the new Congress-Left Government offers greater space to situate the MDGs into the regime of national goals set and to translate these into operationalising concrete livelihood rights in the country.

DALITS – THE MISSING DIMENSION IN THE MDGs PROCESS:

It is indeed revealing, though not surprising, that the whole debate on MDGs in India, till now, has continued as though in a virtual casteless discrimination-free society framework. While the question of gender finds mention routinely, there is hardly a mention of dalits or tribals, who still continue to be the most excluded communities of the country.

The significant finding regarding the implementation of MDGs at the global level – that even in countries that have been most successful in the implementation of MDGs, very specific sections of the population have been excluded or left behind – fits India more than any other country, especially related to the plight of dalits.

Ranging from successive Reports by the National SC/ST Commission and the Black Paper, brought out by the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, there have been any number of studies to prove that, in this country, dalits have tended to be excluded and have lagged behind other sections of population in literally every dimension of human and social development.

Collating some of the facts presented in the Black Paper and correlating them with the major Goals and Targets of MDGs can indeed be revealing- as to how far, after more than 50 years of planning, the socio-economic status of dalits has significantly lagged behind that of others:

Goal 1: Population below Poverty line

| Year | | General Population | Dalits |
|---------|-------|--------------------|--------|
| 1977-78 | | 51.2% | 64.6% |
| 1983-84 | | 40.4% | 53.1% |
| 1987-88 | | 33.4% | 44.7% |
| 1993-94 | Urban | 37.27% | 49.48% |
| | Rural | 32.36% | 48.11% |

- “That the percentage of dalits below the poverty line in 1993-94 (49.48% in urban and 48.11% in rural areas) is an increase over that of 1987-88 (44.70%) is very alarming.”
- “That above 50% of dalits in rural as well as urban areas live below the poverty line is an appalling situation.”
- “In 1991, 86.25% of SC households were landless (13.34) and near landless/marginal (72.91).”
- “The high incidence of landlessness and near landlessness among SCs creates an enormously high proportion of wage labour households, as was the case in 1987-88 when, of the total SC rural households, as many as 63.14% were wage labour households.”

Monthly Per capita Consumption Expenditure (Rs)

| | | Dalits | Non-Dalits |
|-------|---------|--------|------------|
| Rural | 1983-84 | 87 | 112 |
| | 1987-88 | 133 | 169 |
| Urban | 1983-84 | 128 | 165 |
| | 1987-88 | 185 | 256 |

- “The difference between SCs and others in both rural and urban areas is very startling and this difference increased from 1983-84 to 1987-88”

Undernourished children

- “57.5% of dalit children under 4 years of age were undernourished in 1992”

Goal 2: Basic Literacy*Literacy rates of Dalits*

| All-India (%) | | Urban (%) | | Rural (%) | |
|---------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| M | F | M | F | M | F |
| 37.41 | | 55.11 | | 33.25 | |
| 49.91 | 23.75 | 66.60 | 42.29 | 45.94 | 19.46 |

Literacy gaps (Between dalits and non-dalits)

| Year | Gaps (%) |
|------|----------|
| 1961 | 17.59 |
| 1971 | 19.13 |
| 1981 | 19.84 |
| 1991 | 17.20 |

- "Only one-third of the SC population is literate"
- "In 1993 enrolment at primary level among SCs was 16.2% while among non-SCs it was 83.8%
- "The national dropout rate among dalit children is 49.35% at primary, 67.77% at middle and 77.65% at secondary level."
- "That in 11 States / UTs, the dropout rate for SCs in all three stages is 50% and above is appalling and an indication of the negligible attention given to the education of SCs"
- "It has been observed that the enrolment of SCs/STs in different, general, technical and non-technical is not satisfactory. The situation is alarming in technical and professional courses where most of the SC/ST seats remained unfilled."

Goal 3: Gender Inequality*Sex Ratio per 1000 males*

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Dalits | 922 |
| General Population | 944 |

Female literacy Gaps

| Year | All-India Total Female | All-India Female Dalit | All-India Female SC |
|------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1961 | 24.02 | 12.95 | 3.29 |
| 1971 | 29.46 | 18.72 | 6.44 |
| 1981 | 43.67 | 29.85 | 10.93 |
| 1991 | 52.21 | 39.29 | 23.76 |

- "The 1991 Census revealed the great disparity between SC women illiteracy rate (76.24) and that of the general population (47.79).
- "The SC female dropout rate at every stage of education is higher than that of either Sc boys or the general female population."
- "That over 83% of SC females drop out of school at the secondary stage, the most crucial one for the next stage of higher education and for future employment, is a tragedy."

Goal 4: Infant Mortality Rate

- "In 1992-93, the infant mortality rate among SCs was 91 per 1000 live births, an excess ranging from 22 to 45% over the national average"

Goal 6: Death Rate

| | Rural | Urban |
|------------|--------|--------|
| Dalits | 15.50% | 12.90% |
| Non-Dalits | 11.20% | 8.40% |

Goal 7: Access to Water, Sanitation and Basic Amenities

| | Electricity | Sanitation |
|------------|-------------|------------|
| Dalits | 30.91% | 9.84% |
| Non-Dalits | 61.31% | 26.76% |

- “The coverage of SC population in the provision of drinking water has been the least (77.54%) up to 31.3.96. In other words, more than 20% of the SC population does not have access to safe drinking water.”
- “About 70% of dalit households have no electricity and 90% have no sanitation. Rural SC households are even more deprived of basic amenities. 78% have no electricity and more than 90% have no sanitation facilities.”

And, over the period since the early 1990s, when the Reforms regime overtook Indian socio-economic scenario, the gaps between dalits and non-dalits, in all dimensions of social development, have only grown. **And, though it is yet to be professionally established, one can safely say that with regard to every one of the 8 Goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators of the MDGs, dalits have lagged behind, been excluded and left behind!**

DALITS-TARGETED POLICY FRAMEWORKS**– CRUCIAL FOR SUCCESS OF MDGs PROGRESS**

The realization that the implementation of MDGs, oftener than not, excludes specific sections of the population has led to many governments to work out specific marginalized groups-targeted policy frameworks, policies and budget allocations. Given the fact that these marginalized sections are at the rock bottom of the social development ladder of the economy, concrete improvement in their situation has been found to be very essential for the very success of MDGs.

Hence any approach towards the implementation of MDGs in a country like India, which ignores to consciously take note of excluded reality of dalits and tribals, is bound to fail. In India, a more focused dalits-targeted policy framework to the MDGs is not only a matter of dalit rights, but such an approach is essential, in a caste-ridden situation like India, for the very success of MDGs, as for any planning process, as witnessed over the last 50 years and more. Given the fact that it is precisely the dalits and dalits who are, to a great extent, at the rock-bottom of the social development ladder, only a dalits/tribals-targeted policy frameworks and budget allocations can take the search for the implementation of MDGS forward.

Hence the success of MDGs depends on the extent to which each of the 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators can be broken down to dalit-specific focus and targeted policy frameworks. This should also lead to proportionate dalit-targeted budget allocations.

There is also the need to identify and evolve goals, targets and indicators, not found in the MDGs framework but are crucial to the livelihood and empowerment of dalits. These too need to be tied up with needed budget allocations.

TASKS AHEAD

Given the above scenario, the Millennium Development Campaign in India needs a more dalit-focused methodology to the implementation of MDGs in India, which would mean, among other things, to focus on the following areas of policy making and budget allocations, geared to greater empowerment of dalits, and by inference, to the very success of the campaign in India.

1. DALITS “RECLAIMING THE DEBATE”

As in other parts of the world, a Millennium Development Campaign has been initiated in India too. Led by a coalition of national civil society orientations, the Campaign intends to bring together the various existing Campaigns on livelihood rights in the country, hoping to find points of convergence, leading to greater synergy in the task of making the Indian Governments (Central, States and Local) vis-à-vis specific rights-based commitments, related to the Constitution and the International Conventions signed and ratified by the Indian Government, and more specifically related to the promises found in the Common Minimum Programme of the newly elected Government at the Centre.

The MDGs India Campaign has identified Right to Livelihoods, Right to Education, Right to Health and Right to Common Resources as the main focal points of the Campaign.

It is crucial that the Campaign, concerned with the above issues and rights, ensures that the concerns and needs of the most excluded sections of India – dalits, tribals, and especially women among them – get focused within each of these rights and at every level of the activities.

And dalits and dalit organizations need to be present at all levels of the MDGs India campaign, with a clear purpose of **“Reclaiming the Debate”** on behalf of the excluded and discriminated sections of Indian population – dalits, tribals and women.

What is needed is nothing less than a campaign around a set of **Dalit Millennium Goals** and a **Dalit Millennium Compact** with the Government and the civil society.

2. DALIT LIVELIHOOD RIGHTS RELATED TO MDGs

More specifically, MDGs provide an excellent opportunity for the campaign in India and elsewhere to focus on the following dalit livelihood rights, which have emerged clearly over the last few years, and which need to be brought in as central concerns and focuses of the MDGs India Campaign:

- Dalits’ Right to land and all common property resources
- Dalits’ Right to Universal compulsory, free and quality education, especially universal primary education
- Dalits’ Right to food and social security
- Dalits’ Right to water, sanitation and all basic needs
- Dalits’ Right to basic health
- Dalits’ Right to adequate jobs and wages...

3. DALITS-DISAGGREGATED DATA MONITORING

The Millennium Campaign needs to lobby hard that Government agencies like the Census department, the Planning Commission, National sample Survey etc start generating and continue to maintain dalits-disaggregated data vis-à-vis not only every livelihood rights of the marginalized but also in relation to each one of the 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators of MDGs. It is also important that the campaign creates systems to monitor such disaggregated data and develop cross-checking them by their own independent research.

DALITS & BUDGET DYNAMICS

"A cursory look at successive budgets of the scheduled caste sector in the Centre as well as in any constituent State of the country will reveal that 'change' is an arena, planners and programme executives still fear to tread upon. They feel safe wearing the mantle of a status-quoist. They profess in "exercising extreme caution before putting one step forward". 'Change' is a most dreaded word in SC budgeting process. At the same time 'change' is the only turn of leaf that SCs have been aspiring for centuries together....

In their strategic planning, it is anathema to provide scope for SCs to frog-leap others. Frog-leaping SCs, in the covert opinion of planners and bureaucrats, will lead to chaotic social upheavals.

None of these Budgets did consciously provide for integration of SCs in the mainstream. On the contrary, the modus operandi of programmes has been to strengthen SC's isolation and sustain their segregation.

They have not recognised the strengths, potentials, excellence and intellectual quality within the SC community. Thereby they have failed to plan for exploiting the same qualities for the growth of the community..."

- Christudoss Gandhi IAS

4. DALIT BUDGETING – SPECIAL COMPONENT PLAN

"Financing for MDGs" has been among the most contested areas of the overall MDGs Campaign. The success of the MDGs lies to a crucial extent on sufficient international aid from developing countries as well as focused budget allocations by the national governments.

Successive Reports by the National SC/ST Commission and even agencies like the Planning Commission and UN agencies like the UNDP have regularly highlighted the point that one of the main reasons for the continued lagging behind of dalits in all spheres of social development is the systemic injustice incurred on dalits by the bureaucracy and the ruling class in the sphere of budgeting for dalits:

"The most important cause for non-development of SCs/STs is non-allocation of resources for their development on a priority. There is an urgent need to set up a national level Development Authority, dealing with all developmental matters pertaining to SCs/STs, at par with the Planning Commission"

"There is lack of concern for the development of SCs/STs and funds allocated have been diverted to other sections, ignoring the basic needs of these classes... Projects conceived for the development of SCs/STs are starved of funds, denying them the due benefits..."

- National SC/ST Commission Report, 1996-97 & 1997-98

"Taking into account the gulf between human development among SC/ST and the rest of the population, the Ministry of Welfare has noted that even if proportionate resources of the Central and State Governments are earmarked and utilized for the development of these communities, it would take many decades before they will be able to catch up with the rest of the population. It is, therefore, essential that much higher level of resources are mobilized, including from multilateral and bilateral sources, for accelerated development of these communities"

- UNDP Report 1997

Special Component Plan (SCP) - Main Elements

1. Out of the total plan outlay, funds allocated for the welfare of SCs should be at least as much as the percentage of their populational representation in the particular State.
2. Every department of the central and State Govts. should initiate concrete steps to evolve separate programmes, in accordance with specific needs and priorities of SCs, under the SCP. And notional allocations under SCP (especially in sectors like Power, Irrigation, Education and Health) need to be avoided.
3. Only those programmes specifically meant for dalits and the percentage amount of funds allocated, as per specific G.O.s, can be included in the SCP.
4. Separate Budget Heads have to be shown in the Budget Link Book, clearly mentioning the receipts-expenditures details of the SCP (in order to prevent diversion, underutilization and misutilization of funds earmarked for SCs).
5. The Department concerned with SC Welfare, in the State and Centre should act as the Nodal Agency for formulation, implementation and monitoring of SCP

- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt of India

Already during the Sixth Five Year Plan, the Indian National Planning Commission had acknowledged openly that decades of planning, crores of rupees spent and thousands of schemes had made no significant impact in the life of dalits and their livelihoods. The very birth of the **Special Component Plan (SCP) for Dalits**, as a new paradigm for dalit empowerment, was precisely due to this conviction – that all general planning processes in this country have tended to exclude and marginalize the already marginalized dalit communities.

The significance of the Special Component Plan for dalits, as **a new paradigm for dalit budgeting** lies in its basic perspectives, such as convergence of all schemes for focussed results, democratically worked out minimum amounts of budget allocations that should reach the dalits, programmes and perspectives worked out by dalits themselves or their representatives and regular systems of self-evaluation and monitoring of progress.

(Rf “Special Component Plan – Dalit Hopes Betrayed?” and “Social Development of Dalits and Tamilnadu Govt. Budget – A critique” by Social watch – Tamilnadu)

The MDG Campaign offers an excellent opportunity to demand from Central and state Governments for a **White paper on the implementation of SCP** by every department and create mechanisms to ensure that proper implementation of SCP becomes a powerful instrument in the manifold empowerment of dalit communities in India.

5. AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS FOR DALITS – A FRESH LOOK

“The data pertaining to representation in services also indicates that while SCs/STs are engaged in lower category jobs such as sweepers, peons, clerks, no sincere efforts have been made by the Govt. to ensure full quota for SCs/STs in the top posts even after 50 years of independence. Near ‘Nil’ representation in universities and teaching profession exhibits the apathy towards these classes...”

“The share of SCs & STs in the governance of the country is abysmally low when we look into the representation in Governors, ministers, judges, secretaries. Same is the story when we see percentage of SCs/STs manning important posts like district collectors, chief secretaries to Govt., DGPs, members of planning commission etc.”

- National SC/ST Commission Report, 1996-97 & 1997-98

While the story of reservations for dalits in jobs, education and Governance remains a mixed reality, demanding constant need to ensure that all the legitimate constitutional guarantees for dalits and are maintained and enlarged, the debate around **“Reservations in the Private Sector”**, in the context of fast globalising Indian economy and society, offers new challenges in the sphere of affirmative action for dalits.

The MDG Campaign can be an excellent opportunity to link the livelihood rights vis-à-vis MDGs with a renewed campaign to monitor the implementation of reservations for dalits in the overall field of governance, social development and economic empowerment.

6. INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Even though the basic perspective of this paper has restricted itself to dalits and the MDGs campaign in India, the Millennium Development campaign offers also to forums such as the International Dalit Solidarity Network to take up the above perspectives at the Asian and even global level. A dalit-focussed approach to MDGs is bound to offer innumerable benefits not only to dalits, but also to the very success of the Millennium Development Campaign.

Given the continued excluded and discriminated livelihoods of more than 200 million dalits in India and across the world, a dalit-focussed approach to MDGs is bound to contribute innumerable benefits not only to dalits, but also to the very success of the Millennium Development Campaign, in India, in Asia and across the world

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“Social Watch – Tamilnadu” is a State-level Resource Centre in the Southern State of Tamilnadu, India. It is the outcome of the 8 years' experiences of the Tamilnadu Peoples' Forum for Social development.

Over the last 8 years (1995-2003), Tamilnadu Peoples' Forum for Social Development has established itself as a credible initiative in the field of PublicPolicy Monitoring, and especially in Budget Monitoring and advocacy. The Forum had taken up series of initiatives to ensure that the basic concerns of the marginalised of the State – dalits, tribals, women, children, small fisherfolk and unorganised labour – determine the social policy framework of the Tamilnadu Government. Its various Budget Critiques, its Tamilnadu Social development Report 2000 and other research publications have been very well received from different quarters.

“Social Watch – Tamilnadu”, the new Resource Centre is intended to take forward the work of the Forum with greater intensity and professional competence and expertise. Monitoring and lobbying for changes in the public social policy of the Tamilnadu Government and its Budgets, based on the socio-economic and livelihood rights of the marginalised of Tamilnadu remains the continuing search and goal of “Social Watch – Tamilnadu”

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