

# *Making Life Worth Living!*



*Towards the People's Health Assembly Book-3*

# *Making Life Worth Living !*

*-Meeting the basic needs of all-Inter-sectoral  
issues in health care*

*Prepared and Published by  
The National Coordination Committee  
for the  
Jan Swasthya Sabha*



*Towards the People's Health Assembly Book-3*

# *Making Life Worth Living?*

First Edition : May 2000

Authored and Published by :

**National Coordination Committee, Jan Swasthya Sabha**

Acknowledgement : Some of the Illustrations have been taken from "Where women have no doctor", "Helping health workers learn", "Danger School" and "Taking Sides"

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Illustrations : R. Kumaraguruparan  
Printed at Mani Offset for South Vision  
Produced, Stocked and Distributed by



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- All India People's Science Network (AIPSN)
- All India Drug Action Network (AIDAN)
- Asian Community Health Action Network (ACHAN)
- All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)
- All India Women's Conference (AIWC)
- Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi (BGVS)
- Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI)
- Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI)
- Forum for Creche & Child Care Services (FORCES)
- Federation of Medical Representatives Associations of India (FMRAI)
- Joint Women's Programme (JWP)
- Medico Friends Circle (MFC)
- National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM)
- National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)
- National Association of Women's Organizations (NAWO)
- Ramakrishna Mission (RK)
- Society for Community Health Awareness, Research and Action (SOCHARA)
- Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI)

### Participating Organizations

Over 1000 organizations concerned with health care and health policy from both within and outside the above networks, have joined the Jan Swasthya Sabha campaign as participating organizations.



# *About the Jan Swasthya Sabha*

Governments & international agencies have forgotten the goal of **Health for All by 2000 A.D.** But we, the people, cannot forget it. It is time to strengthen & expand people centered initiatives - to find innovative solutions & to put pressure on decision makers, governments and the private sector.

There is a need to reiterate that attaining **Health for All** means ensuring everyone has access to affordable quality medicare, safe drinking water and sanitation, adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter and employment and no one is discriminated against on the basis of class, caste, race or gender. People need to be made aware of the links between globalization and the worsening health of the people. When structural adjustment policies work to undermine the vision of Alma Ata, renewing the Health for All call is an imperative.

With this understanding a large number of people's movements across the country have jointly initiated a national campaign called the Jan Swasthya Sabha. This has three broad objectives:

- ☛ To re-establish health and equitable development as top priorities in policy making with primary health care as the strategy.
- ☛ To forge a local, national and global unity of all democratic forces to work towards building long term sustainable solutions to health.
- ☛ Reinforce the principle of health as a broad inter-sectoral issue

The campaign has a four-tier structure. 2000-3000 blocks in 200-300 districts mobilize people on **Health For ALL – Now!** and conduct block level enquiries into the state of health services. These enquiries culminate in block seminars highlighting the findings & helping formulate people's initiatives for primary health care. Then, each district has a district level mobilization culminating in a District Seminar. All this builds up to the Jan Swasthya Sabha to be held in Calcutta from Nov 30<sup>th</sup> – Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 2000. Four trains with representatives from various parts of the country will arrive at the National Assembly. The Jan Swasthya Sabha – with over 2000 representatives – will call for a reversal of structural adjustment policies and a renewal of the *Health for All* pledge. The assembly will also send its representatives to the international People's Health Assembly being held at Dhaka from Dec 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, 2000 where similar representatives from other countries will gather. Following the Jan Swasthya Sabha, each interested block or district follows up with health intervention and advocacy.

The Jan Swasthya Sabha is being coordinated by a National Coordination Committee consisting of 18 major all India networks of peoples movements and NGOs. This book is the Third book in a 5 book series brought out by the NCC for guiding the block, district and state seminars.

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## Chapter I

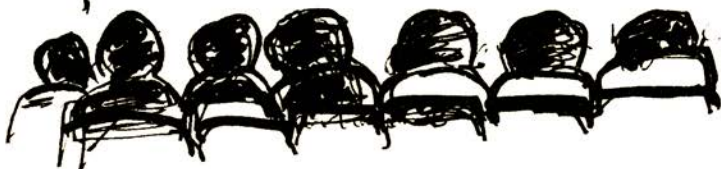
# Health for All – Basic Needs for All

### WORLD DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE ON HEALTH



Friends! I have good and bad news.  
First the good news: It has now  
been proven that food and water are  
excellent for good health.

And the bad news: People have  
neither food nor water.



Health depends more on living  
conditions than on health care  
services. Let's see what the  
Alma Ata has to say about this...



Primary health care includes, in addition to the health sector, all related sectors and aspects of national and community development, in particular: agriculture, animal husbandry, food, industry, education, housing, public works, communications and other sectors and demands the coordinated efforts of those sectors.

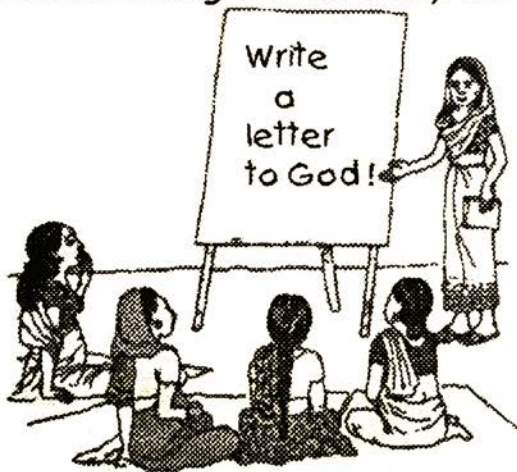
- Alma Ata Declaration, 1978



What do we need for a life with dignity? To ensure a life without drudgery? To lead a happy life? Let's see what poor women in the literacy movement had to say about this...



### *A class during the Literacy Movement*



### *And the letters that they wrote...*

DEAR GOD,  
THE WATER LORRY SHOULD COME TODAY.

DEAR GOD,  
MAKE THE BUS SERVICE TO OUR VILLAGE COME SOON.

DEAR GOD,  
I HOPE THE CHILD BIRTH TAKES PLACE WITHOUT TROUBLE.

DEAR GOD,  
PLEASE MAKE SURE MY HUSBAND DOES NOT DRINK TODAY.

DEAR GOD,  
I WISH WE GET A FAIR PRICE FOR THE COCOONS TODAY IN THE MARKET OR ELSE WE CANNOT PAY OFF THE MONEYLENDER.



What kind of a place do you want Heaven to be?

Where mosquitoes  
don't bite & I get  
a good sleep!

Where we  
feel safe!

Where I get up at 7 AM, there  
is water in the pipe, wood in  
the stove, fodder for the cattle  
& time to spend with my kids.



The interesting point is that we can  
create such a heaven on the earth even  
today! With just the knowledge and  
wealth already available, the basic  
needs of all people can be met.

And remember this is not asking too much!

Providing the basic needs of existence is itself one of the central goals of human society. The denial of these basic needs robs human existence of its dignity. Life itself becomes sub-human.

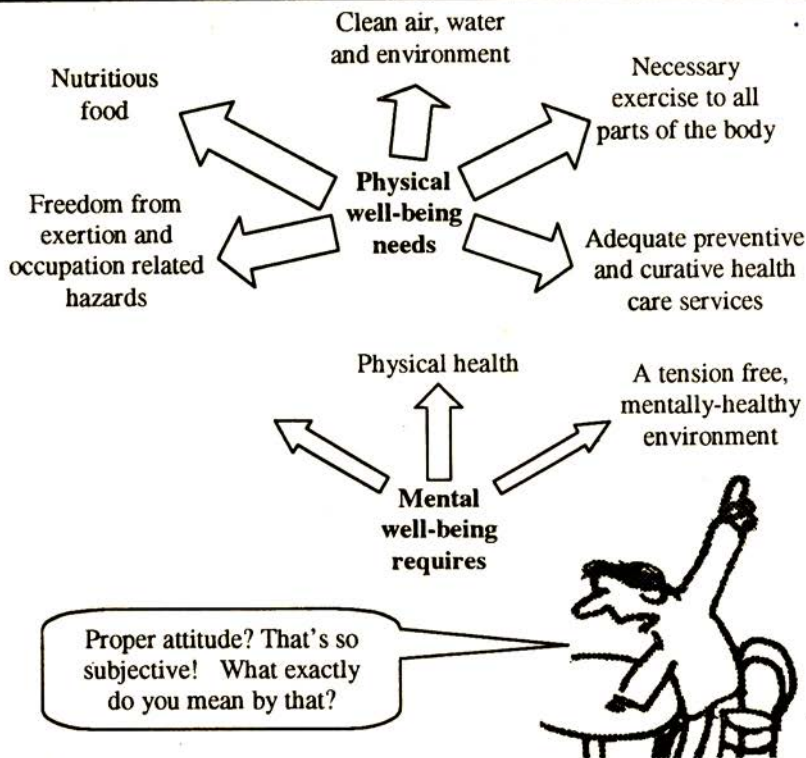
### The Quality of Life

Health status is a measure of the quality of life of people. Where these basic necessities are available the quality of life can be said to be good and people are healthy. Where these are not available, the health situation is bad and life is a struggle.

## Let us look at the *Health for All* slogan again!

- ☞ **Health** means total physical, mental & social well-being.
- ☞ **All** means literally **ALL** and not just a lucky few.

No slogan ending *for All* has been realized, whether it is *Health for All* or *Education for All*, or *Food for All*. *All* remains a rhetoric. In reality everything has been only for a *few*. This agenda now is to make *All* really **ALL**!



By *Proper Attitude Towards Life* we mean "A proper understanding of human needs and their relationships, of basic needs like food, clothing & shelter; of emotional needs like affection & security; of social needs such as recognition." Without this mental well-being is not possible.

What does such a definition imply?







A society which demands a continuous increase of consumption and exchange of goods & services for its existence, a society which manufactures needs at a higher rate than the means to satisfy them, can have no proper understanding, can have no wisdom and no well being.

Similarly, without physical health there is no mental health.



Everyone should have access to food, clothing shelter, education and health care services.



Accessibility can be ensured and enforced as a right only when participation in economic activity too becomes a basic right.



A society with unemployment not just as an existing reality, but also a theoretical necessity, cannot enforce economic participation as a fundamental right.



*Therefore, Health for All requires amongst other things a continuous increase in economic and political participation of citizens and also a counter education against greed and for wisdom.*

But remember - these will not be provided by rulers and leaders of the present society! Their entire philosophy of existence is based on greed and competition.



*And this is why we need to search for alternatives and the Jan Swasthya Sabha Campaign is an important attempt to further this search!*



## The Jan Swasthya Sabha Campaign Focus

The one year long national campaign preceding the People's Health Assembly at Dhaka, should be used as an opportunity to:

1. Raise the issue of genuine development
2. Question the wisdom of globalization, liberalization, privatization and consumerism  
To expose the complicity (both conscious and unconscious) of the minority (of less than 20%) in betraying the interests of *All*.

The country has to re-charter its course in the interests of the majority. The Jan Swasthya Sabha Campaign should search and develop alternative paths of development and campaign for it. A campaign like this can be effective only when criticism is backed up by suggestions and actions – through which can flow people's creative energies.

The campaign should catalyze into action panchayats, voluntary organizations, people's movements, mass movements of workers, peasants, women, youth, students, professionals, artists etc.

While criticism of state policy can be done at international, national and state levels, creative action has to be planned locally – in blocks, villages and panchayats. Seminars and workshops preceded by systematic enquiry and dialogue with the people can be held at these levels to generate possibilities for creative action.



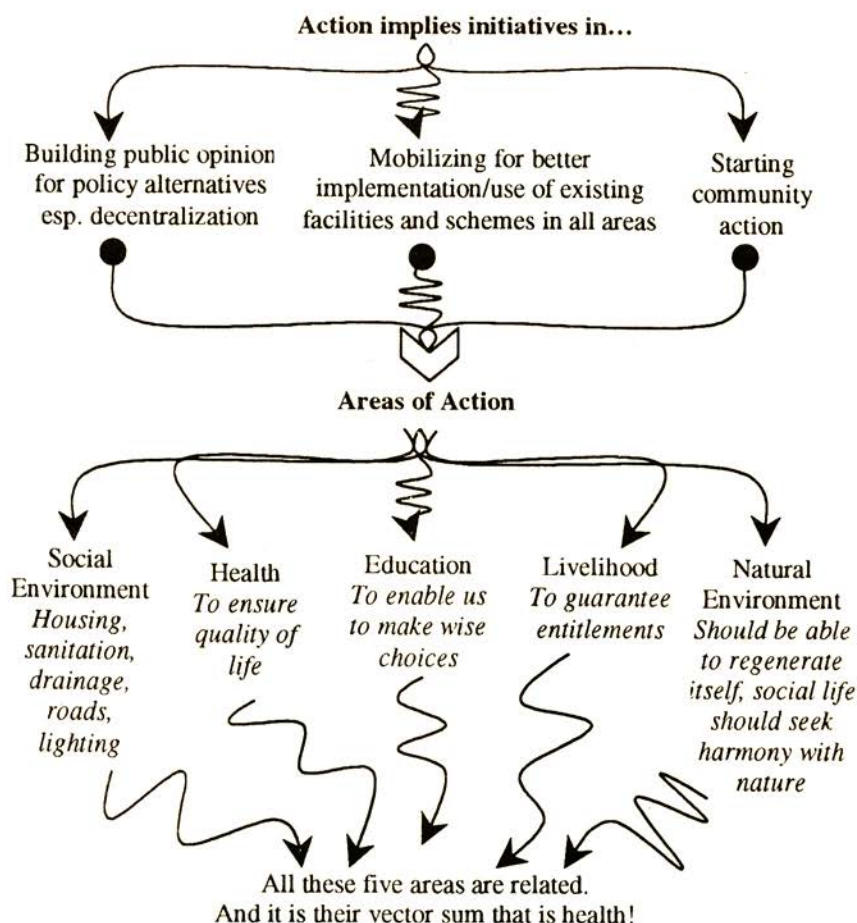
Implementation campaigns for sanitation, safe drinking water, nutrition, basic amenities like housing and roads, education and livelihoods as well as interventions for preventive and curative health care can be effective only if planned and done at local levels.

The slogan '**Health For All Now!**' indicates that...

- We have been waiting with expectation that somebody will bring Health for All sometime in the future – say 2000 AD!
- We are disillusioned
- We are going to start acting *Now* for our health

What does health action mean?





This book examines the crisis in providing these basic needs for a dignified life. It examines why despite needs like drinking water being a political demand, the government has been unable to deliver even these. It examines the impact of structural adjustment policies on the provisioning of these basic needs. This book presents some case studies of alternatives and discusses the nature of people's initiatives and policy changes that are needed to make the provision of basic needs for all a reality. Only then does health for all become a reality! Since the area to be covered is vast, we have not focused on a detailed critique of the existing situation. Rather, the focus is on a minimum understanding needed for us to initiate a dialogue with people and plan for alternatives.

## Chapter-II

# *Provisioning of Basic Civic Amenities*

How surprising that in a democracy, people's expressed needs for basic civic amenities has remained unfulfilled for so many years !

Maybe it is not so easy to provide these amenities?

No! That can't be the reason. Technically there is nothing very difficult about providing drinking water, sanitation, roads or street lights.

You are right. It should be easy. And politically, even with current political standards, it makes sense to meet these populist demands. Quite surprising!



That providing livelihoods has been a problem because of the very unequal distribution of assets and skills as well as economic factors beyond the 'community's control seems plausible. Education and health care has had some effort at provisioning. Its quality is questionable – but at least something that can be called an education or a health care facility has been set up.

But what really makes no sense at all is how even simple civic amenities like drinking water or street lights – these simple basic amenities that every villager asks for and knows to ask for – are not yet provided for. Within a democracy, populist demands should have forced the state to fulfill these basic needs. But it has not yet happened.

The why of this is what this chapter will look at through 3 examples – drinking water, sanitation and housing.



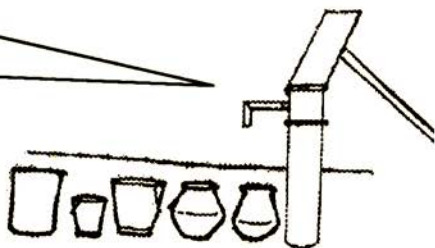
## Drinking Water

1980s: The Rajiv Gandhi National drinking water mission launches a major programme to provide drinking water to all villages.

Mark II & Mark III  
Hand pumps for All!  
This was the main  
strategy on which the  
programme was based!

Another strategy widely  
resorted to was: installing  
a bore-well and pumping

water to an overhead tank and then supplying water from the tank to the  
village through a stand post in each street. A village was considered  
covered if either of the above was installed. The number of villages  
listed as "problem villages" declined drastically and soon was almost  
reduced to zero.



However there were problems with this. One of the first to be  
recognized was that many hamlets within villages were uncovered.

I am a Dalit and I  
am not allowed to  
use the hand pump!

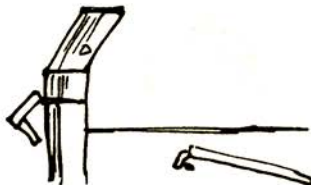


Nobody stops me from taking  
water. But how can I walk 3 km  
everyday to fetch water?



Disaggregated to hamlets, it was realized that a third of the hamlets  
were "not covered". The programme has since been addressing this and  
at present the number of habitations reported covered is in the range of  
81%, with the corresponding figure for rural areas being 79% and for  
urban areas being 84%.

The second problem with the borewell  
strategy was the very common breakdown  
of the hand pump or mechanized pumping  
mechanism and the need to constantly  
repair it. To a large extent the Mark-III  
design was meant to overcome this. The



Who will repair the pump?



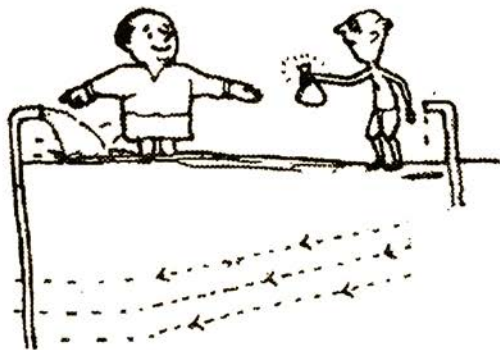
installation came along with training to the local community to repair it and with a tool kit as well. In many places like in Banda in UP women were trained to repair it. Though this was a good example of what could be done, in practice such local training of women remained an exception. In most places maintenance is still the main problem.

But the most intractable problem was the lowering of the water table! Because of excess water drawn through energized pump-sets & due to disuse of recharge mechanisms like the village ponds & tanks.

But how much water can be drawn for drinking? That can't possibly lower water table significantly!



True – drinking water can't do much harm. But the excess water drawn was for irrigation! And particularly with the cropping pattern shift to more water-intensive cropping like three harvests of paddy in a year or sugarcane etc, within a couple of years the water table fell dramatically! The rich could deepen the bore wells, continued to draw long after the poor were deprived even of water for drinking! Obviously one needed an integrated planning and an equitable one, but such factors were never taken in to account.



Sometimes the hand pump works and still people don't use the water!

This is often because of iron which gives it a bad taste & colour. Sometimes it is fluorosis or arsenic – both dangerous. Both are also problems whose dimensions continue to

expand. As deeper & deeper groundwater sources are tapped, chemicals leaching out of rock formations contaminate the water. This was not a problem with surface water, but with groundwater it is and as water levels fall it will become more of a problem.



But In our village, borewell water is saline. Our pond water is so much tastier!

The advantage of groundwater sources extracted through a bore well is that mostly (though not always) it is safer water. Open wells are easily contaminated and all other surface water sources like ponds, tanks, streams are almost always contaminated. Of course, in many areas where ponds are the source of drinking water some ponds are earmarked for drinking & kept free from contamination due to washing, bathing & animals. Still, runoff contamination can't be prevented. However, in many villages where a tube well is installed & ground water is tolerable, surface water sources may still be preferred because of cultural factors. In the absence of adequate information on waterborne diseases & the toll they take, the need to shift to safer sources is not appreciated.

So what is the actual safe water usage in the country?

Far less than the projected 80%!



An NCAER countrywide sample study puts unprotected water usage at a huge 52%. Of the protected water sources 16.6% is piped water (usually from bore wells), 18.4% is from hand pumps, and another 13% is from other sources of which open wells would be the majority.



In our mathematics, 200000 problem villages minus 200000 problem villages is still 200000 problem villages!

N. C. Saxena, Secretary Rural Development - Quoted in Indian Express, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

That this is the situation in a problem that has always been a priority and a problem for which sufficient political will has been there is indeed a sad commentary on the governance of the nation.



## SAP and Drinking Water

Structural adjustment of course does not concern itself with issues like drinking water. Indeed drinking water has never been a major concern of such economists. However, as government expenditure is curtailed under SAP, the provision of such services is also curtailed. There is also considerable speculation amongst pro-SAP policy makers on the possibilities of privatizing drinking water supply.



The government has failed to provide drinking water. What's wrong with privatizing it?

This is a ridiculous argument! Why? Because...

1. Even in countries where water supply was privatized, there are considerable complaints of high prices, poor service & poor quality.
2. In a poor country like ours the idea that majority of people will have to pay for drinking water is just not acceptable.

I'm providing safe drinking water.  
Just leave it to the private sector!



What we need to examine is how government schemes should function, not whether they should function at all! This is just like committing suicide because one has to face some problems in life!

This dichotomy - between the private sector and the public sector where the former is taken to be synonymous with the corporate sector, and the latter with the centralized bureaucracy, is a false dichotomy.



Hey! And what about the People's sector - control by local communities?

## Sanitation

The track record in sanitation is dismal and has always been so. The current figure for access to latrines is estimated at 29%.



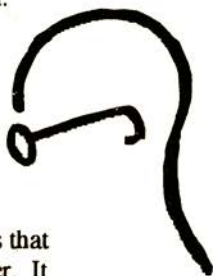
And this generous estimate counts everyone who lives in a habitation with a community latrine as having access – though in practice none of the latrines may be functional!

This also explains why according to these figures 70% of urban India is stated to have an access to sanitation. It counts every latrine built as being used, though this is far from true. Even with such fantastic over-estimation techniques, rural India sanitation coverage is a dismal 14% !

Even with such an over-estimation we are one of the poorest achievers on the sanitation front in the world. Thus even an impoverished Sub Saharan African country like Kenya has 81% coverage, Tanzania has 86%, Nigeria has 41% and Uganda has 57%. Even neighboring Sri Lanka and Pakistan have 63% and 56% coverage respectively.

The situation in sewage, drainage and solid waste disposal in both rural and urban areas is also equally, if not more, dismal.

Imagine! And in a country where I once fought for sanitation as an important component of the freedom struggle!



It is surprising considering the consistent emphasis that Planners have always given to sanitation on paper. It is true that the expenditure on sanitation has been low but, the government would assure you, even this much utilization has been difficult. Most often latrines built are just not used or are used for other purposes like storing firewood.

Another surprising finding that we should read along with these very same figures is the consistent way surveys especially in the last decades have shown a fairly high awareness and demand for sanitary facilities. This is much more so amongst women for whom sanitation is closely



linked to the whole question of personal dignity. With declining scrub cover, privacy becomes such a problem.

Sanitation is not such an important priority.



Speak for yourself! I certainly want a toilet! Do you know what a strain it is to wait till darkness to relieve oneself?



**Tick the correct answer!**

Which of the following is most closely related to sanitation demand?

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| (a) Per Capita Income | (c) Health Status |
| (b) Poverty           | (d) Education     |

If you guessed Education – you are right! Education and the consequent changes in perception amongst women have also made sanitation an urgent priority, more so in semi-urban areas and large villages and areas where women's education is higher. As we compare across states the performance in sanitation is most related to education and the nature of interventions with which the problem has been addressed.

Other major dimensions like wastewater and solid waste collection and disposal need action by local bodies (both elected representatives and local officials). Whereas in urban areas this presents an enormous and visible (and malodorous) problem, even in rural areas it is a problem that tells on health and the quality of life.



But we don't have the minimum funds needed for adequate staff and so the working conditions are so poor that we are unable to enforce any work discipline on those hired.

At least in urban areas, it's someone's job.  
In most rural areas it is no one's agenda !

### ***SAP and Sanitation***

Sanitation is one of the least discussed sectors in the economic reforms literature. Obviously it is just not their concern. There is little interest even in privatizing sanitation, except in larger urban municipalities. If anything the lack of sanitation provides a multi-crore industry - like mosquito repellents!

This year we have had the largest mosquito repellent sales.  
Next year we hope to increase sales even more.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
OF  
MOSQUITO REPELLERS

Not surprising therefore, that sanitation is that one sector which all state & central governments allocate to local elected bodies - with almost no funds for the purpose! And as government funds are further curtailed, local bodies are told to raise their own resources!

### **Housing**

**Did you know?**

The lowest estimate of  
housing shortfall still comes to  
22.9 million houses!!



This was the estimate by the National Housing Policy Statement - 1998 and is based on the 1991 census. The minimum resources needed for completing this task in the Ninth plan period was estimated at Rs. 1,51,000 crore! Urban infrastructure will need a further 2,50,000 crore.

During the initial years of planning in India, the level of confidence in effective government intervention in housing was high. But budget allocations did not match up to dreams.

**The falling budget outlay for housing ...**

	<b>II Plan</b>	<b>V Plan</b>	<b>VIII Plan</b>
<b>% of Total Budget</b>	2.5%	1.5%	1.47%

Private investment in housing has also not kept pace, though the ratio of private to public investment has shifted in favor of the private sector.

PLAN	Public Investment	Private Investment	How much larger is Pvt?	% of Total Investment
II	300	900	Pvt is 3 times Pub	19%
VII	2500	29000	Pvt is 10 times Pub	Only 9%

Source EPW: Social impact of reforms, Vol 35, No.10, March 4-10, pg. 845

How does the government pay for housing?



Through a number of central and state schemes. One of the largest central schemes specifically directed to the economically weaker sections is the Indira Awas Yojana. State housing schemes come under the minimum needs programmes. But these schemes don't build very many houses when you compare it with the need!

*Then what should be the approach?*

**This!**

### The Rural Housing Approach

1. In rural areas where land is more easily available, a traditional structure using local materials can be built by the family itself. If there is a demand for a better all-weather construction, and they have the income most families will suitably upgrade their homes.

Give us land and income – we will build our own homes!





2. The approach should be seen as
  - a. Providing land
  - b. Helping the rural households to upgrade their existing dwelling units periodically
  - c. Ensuring minimum wages and employment
  - d. Enabling access to credit at reasonable rates.
3. Building a concrete structure for these dwellings is not the priority and the problem of rural housing should not be equated with this.

### ***The Urban Housing Situation***



The housing situation in urban and semi urban areas is grim and we must look at it carefully...

In 1947 our total population was 33 crore. Of this 14% was urban. In 2001, urbanites form 33% of the population. That means there are 33 crore of them - the same as the entire population at independence! By 2025, the urban population will cross the 50 percent mark.

#### ***How is this population distributed?***

6 Mega Cities (Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad) each have more than 40 lakh people each. Another 40 metropolitan cities, 300 large towns (population > 1lakh) and 3396 small towns together make up the rest. Note that almost 60% of the GDP will be from urban India by 2001.

*Source: Suresh V, Managing Director HUDCO, Address on Directions for Rural and Urban Development in the New Millennium.*

#### **Urbanites !**

84% have at least partial access to potable water.

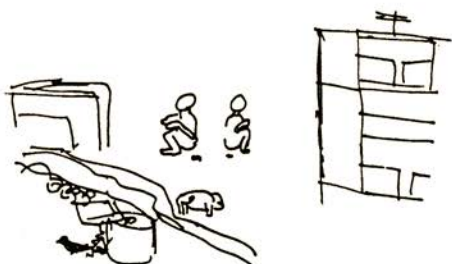
Only 46% have access to sewerage and sanitation services.

31% have no access to latrines.

28% have no access of any sort of waste collection.

One fourth have no electricity.

Pollution and an unhealthy environment affect most urban areas.







The overall percentages hide the actual distribution! Almost all the gaps in facilities are concentrated in the slums. The population living in slums is not a minority – much of the urban population lives there!

Slums have little civic infrastructure, the most rudimentary (informal) housing, and the people living there often neither have rights to the land nor access to any state health facilities.

***Recognize the 3 aspects of the slum situation***

1. Most slums are not illegal. Many are legal and recognized. But there are also many authorized squatter settlements that are ignored by all planners unless they manage political clout.
2. Many slums that are legal today started illegally and through a long struggle gained the right to live in security and dignity. Often this was gained through long negotiations with politicians.
3. Even in the worst of such settlements and even on pavements community structures & bonds emerge. These communities build their own homes and play an important part in the economy and their location is often important for this role. Even if removed, this relationship - where the city needs their labour and they need the employment - brings them back.

You can't shift us around whenever you want!



Dirty, illegal and criminal slum-dwellers!  
These slums should be cleared quickly.



Such an attitude led to managing slums by largely evictions and demolitions. Applying criteria of aesthetics (beautifying campaigns), housing standards & legalities these settlements are treated as if other than eviction there is no option. This was the main trend in the sixties right through the eighties. A number of states in the 1982-84 period passed anti-encroachment legislation presumably to check

unauthorized construction by commercial interests but given the nature of power was more used against the poor. By changing trespass from a civil to a criminal offense the law criminalized millions of people and exposed them to further exploitation and harassment.

### **Greed – An ugly side of ‘Aesthetic’ Evictions**

Selective development of infrastructure and location of government and commercial offices lead to land prices shooting up.



Land speculators and the real estate magnates who own most of the land benefit immensely from an eviction and push for it with their political clout. Often even the middle class has to leave the center and migrate to distant, low infrastructure suburbs to survive.



Evict those  
dirty slums  
immediately!

### ***Effects of SAP on the Housing Situation***

The National Campaign for Housing Rights states that the accelerated unemployment that accompanies SAP, especially when coupled with sharply rising prices, the impact of cuts in subsidies on social services such as health, the impact of privatization and abrogation by the State of its responsibilities in planning leads to further increases in land and housing prices, including a sharp increase in the forced criminalization of the poor and an increasing eviction and demolition by private and public landlords in order to reclaim the land for more profitable uses.

The entire process of structural adjustment is only going to worsen these trends.

The Urban Land Ceiling Act of 1976 was the only progressive piece of legislation on urban housing that the government had enacted. Now it has also been repealed to allow “market forces to act”. The truth is that like the rural land ceiling act this was never implemented and almost no land was anywhere confiscated or surrendered and resold under this act.

*“These are not conditionalities of SAP but they mark the shift from the populist socialism of the Seventies to the brazen marketism of the nineties. The very vision of social housing has been lost. Housing is no longer considered an instrument for bringing about redistributive justice.”*

- Jai Sen, Convener of NCHR

# *Learning from Success*

## *Case Studies*

### 1. The Kerala Decentralization Experience

**1996:** Kerala State government goes in for a major political and economic decentralization! And not just in name - 40% of the entire state budget was given to panchayats !

Wow! But why did this happen?  
What made the government take  
this major step?

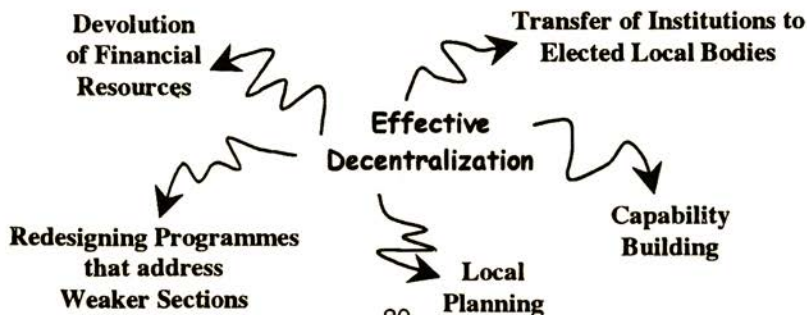


There were two main roots to this radical experiment.

One was within the ruling party itself. There was a need to find a way wherein the government could respond to people's expectations despite being limited to ruling only a state government and despite the inability to make radical changes in assets or income distribution or even in raising resources from the rich.

The second reason was a growing intellectual commitment to decentralization as an inherent value, as essential to participatory democracy and to empowering people. Characterizing this latter trend was the KSSP's sustained campaign for decentralization and its active initiatives to promote this goal.

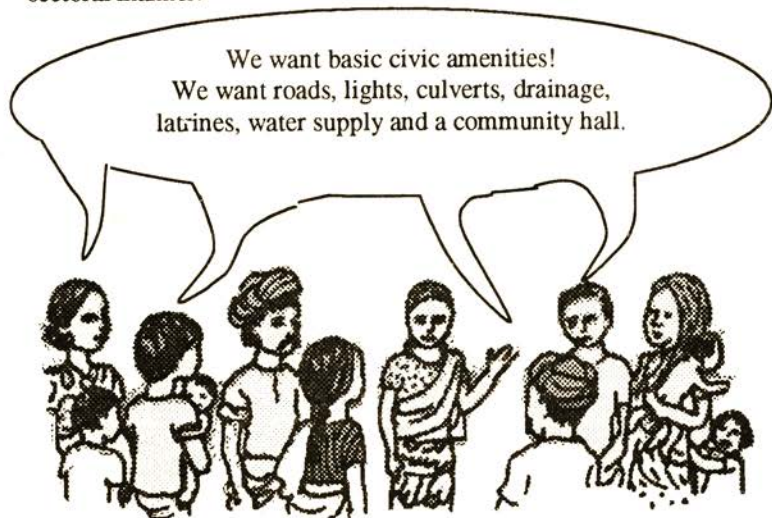
### Essential Components for Effective Decentralization



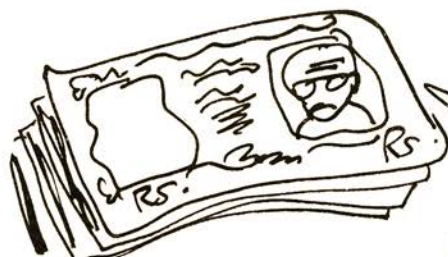


In most states, the government sees the provisioning of these basic amenities as the panchayat's major – often only – function. But the panchayat neither has the funds nor the freedom to plan for their provision. In Kerala, both these prerequisites were provided to the panchayats. But the Kerala decentralization experiment went far beyond this to cover health and education sectors, rural development, poverty alleviation programmes, women's development and welfare programmes, agriculture, irrigation and the small scale and cottage industry sections.

In each of these sectors, decentralization devolved finances, transferred institutions, built local capabilities and set up processes to plan locally. Thus, for the first time, it was possible to plan for health in an inter-sectoral manner.



In the first year, the panchayats were only partially effective as they were just learning the system and contending with resistance from established interests at every level. But as the years passed the situation improved. Many of the basic amenities that had remained as demands for over 50 years were achieved in the first few years of this change.





## Devolving Funds

A political decision was reached to **devolve 40% of the state budget** to panchayats. The total devolution to local bodies was Rs.1025 Crore in 1997-98, Rs.1178 Crore in 1998-99 and Rs.1250 Crore in 1999-2000.

On an average, each Gram Panchayat receives Rs.60 Lakh, a Block Panchayat Rs. 90 Lakh and the District Panchayat Rs. 10 Crore every year as plan grant-in-aid. Each Municipality gets around Rs. 1 Crore and a Corporation Rs. 15 Crore. The respective local body has the power to identify, prepare and implement projects within its allocation.

Wow! In our state, they only promise Rs. 1-2 Lakh and even that takes ages to come and needs so many forms to be filled.



### The Allocation Nitty Gritties...

This money is distributed to the local bodies on the basis of a fixed formula. The rural-urban demarcation is made on the basis of population share with respect to general sector grant-in-aid. In the distribution of plan grant-in-aid under SCP/TSP a higher weightage is given to the rural population. There are also broad sectoral investment guidelines. Local bodies are to invest minimum of 40% of their grant-in-aid for the productive sectors & not more than 30% for the infra-structural sector. For the SCP & TSP portion of the grant-in-aid, these ceilings are not applicable. The allocation of 10% of the grant-in-aid for the women component plan was made compulsory. Money available from various central schemes was also seen as resource allocations & panchayats could use these resources for the stated purpose but with considerable flexibility in the approach.

Ok – so the money is decentralized. But what about power ? Who controls the schools, the hospitals, the PHCs, the Sub centers, the Homeo and Ayurveda dispensaries, rural development and poverty alleviation programmes?

Of course the Local Bodies!




## Transferring Institutions


All the staff members including medical officers have been transferred to the local bodies. The state government on behalf of the local bodies manages the appointment, promotion, transfer and salaries. The local bodies have been given all the financial and administrative control of these health institutions. The state government has only technical control over these institutions through the concerned department.

Medicines and instruments are purchased centrally and distributed to the institutions through the District Medical Officers based on the information submitted by the medical officers.

In addition to the plan grant-in-aid, the department provides to the local bodies, finances for the day-to-day functioning and maintenance. The local bodies are also authorized to buy medicines in cases of emergency. When there is shortage of doctors, the local bodies are also authorized to appoint doctors on contract basis, the salary for them being paid by the state government.



Hey! Did you hear? The entire subjects of rural development and poverty alleviation has been handed over to the panchayats, and the corresponding department and ministry at the state level has been abolished!!



But just transfer of funds and institutions is not enough. What about skills and capabilities?

Exactly! That's why we need...

## Building Capabilities and Local Level Planning

Local Planning requires identification of local priorities and ways to address these priorities. There is also a need to redesign programmes that address weaker sections – to make them more effective. Most ongoing government schemes are flawed in design, being more appropriate for a centrally driven, fragmented approach with a standardized choice of technology, than for a decentralized plan. Often current schemes are only demonstrative with no real chance of success. Adopting these programmes without redesigning them will not help improve their efficiency.

People's Campaign for Ninth Plan has brought in a sense of need for community involvement in development activities. A systematic and very extensive training programme preceding the planning process helped to build capabilities to undertake planning. Helped by the officials in the line departments and organizations like the KSSP, the panchayats drew up cost estimates and designs and proceeded to implement these plans. In the health sector, the programme facilitated the emergence of a significant amount of local level initiative in health & slowly a number of innovative integrated projects are coming up from the local bodies.

Though in these first three years the rate of change has been slow, the capabilities are getting built and one can hope for better results in the coming years. Certainly they are in the right direction!

## 2. The Midnapore Sanitation Programme

### Did you know ?

The Midnapore District Sanitation Programme has installed over 1.5 lakh domestic latrines in the district with almost no overt subsidy component!!

Wow! That will make it one of the most successful sanitation programmes ever!  
How did they manage it?

Let's look at some of the key components...

1. There was a partnership between the district administration, the elected panchayats and an NGO - the Ramakrishna Mission.
2. The programme followed the massive mobilization of the total literacy campaign in Midnapore district and this programme itself had a major mobilizational and educational component. Indeed this "IEC" was the main activity the government concentrated on.



3. The delivery of the latrine was organized through the sanitary mart concept. The sanitary mart supplied building material and all components of the latrine as well as all components of domestic sanitation with a little mark-up so that all the components were easily available at affordable prices. Production of the prefabricated components in a production center and running the sanitary mart was developed as a way of providing employment for local youth. These youth were trained and provided some capital and support for the first year. Installation was by locally trained masons. The employment generated by the programme was high. It is important to note that generally the production center, the sanitary mart and the masons were independent enterprises but networked together so that they provided employment for each other.
4. There was no subsidy at all. If some money was available for this purpose, that would be distributed to all customers by subsidizing the pan and trap or some such strategy.
5. There was considerable flexibility in latrine design and rates. There were 8 standard designs for the customers to choose from. Moreover the designs were up gradable. One could start with a 600-rupee latrine and progressively upgrade to a two-pit pucca superstructure 6000-rupee latrine. Buyers had the option of reducing costs by contributing labour or material.
6. The panchayats were systematically involved at every stage. In some areas, they ran the marts themselves, though unsuccessfully.
7. Replication of the programme in other districts was not as easy. Substantial working capital is required if payment in instalments is considered, or if credit is being advanced to the purchasers.
8. No other subsidy-based schemes should be operational in the area.
9. Govt. cooperation in IEC while supporting and allowing delivery by local enterprises is essential. The notion of partnership was difficult to replicate as either govt. or NGO or both, would feel that they could manage on their own. Which, of course, they could not!

### **The main achievements...**

Demonstrating that through a flexible programme which involves the local community, a sustainable, no-subsidy programme on sanitation is possible. Whereas earlier programmes stopped once the subsidy was used up, this programme continued to grow. This programme also generated employment for hundreds (masons, production centers, mart managers etc.) & helped the local economy. This rural employment occurred by opening up & tapping a major rural market built around people's genuine needs, thereby increasing the quality of life.



### 3. The Site and Service Route

The Bilaspur Asha Abhiyan  
and other Slum Development/Resettlement programmes



The poor living in slums make an essential economic contribution to the city. They have more than earned their right to secure and dignified living conditions.

How to ensure this happens?

**Follow these nine steps to realize Heaven on Earth...**

1. Create an institutional structure, usually a registered society, with all families represented and an adequate gender mix.



Be careful and identify the REAL residents. Slumlords control most of the land. They are thrice offenders – (1) they have illegally occupied land, (2) they have illegally let it out and collect a rent from what is not theirs and (3) they evict tenants at will for extraction of rent or favour!

2. In any resettlement, give rights only to the real residents and not to benami persons or else the control remains with the slumlords. This is critical - as the slumlords have political and criminal connections.
3. Offer to legalize all the current residents' ownership of land allocating a minimum for each. In return they plan out amongst themselves a way to resettle/relocate their houses in the same space so that everyone gets the minimum space plus proper sewage, waterlines, roads and a playground.
4. The expense for building their house is their own. The government can help with credit given through the same society.
5. The design of both the habitat and individual houses is not directed from outside. Sensitive architects can help people make a good choice. (This has been seen in other programmes like the Mahila Milan programme where 600 pavement dwelling women drew up their own designs.)

6. Once the construction starts, the families shift as required, till the basic realignment of houses is achieved.
7. The municipality comes in now to lay the sewer, water and electricity lines.
8. After this, other supportive activities like continuing and vocational education programmes, health care, daycare centers for children etc can also be organized so that in a phased manner and under their own guidance they win the basic necessities of a life with dignity and security.

The two critical steps in this is building and sustaining the institutional arrangement at the local level and the granting of land rights to the residents excluding the slumlords who are not resident there. Often enough, this process of excluding the slumlords from the process gets the initiating official transferred out and the programme is scuttled!



I know. It happened to me.



#### 4. The UNGRA Model

No! She is not a model from Ungra!  
We are talking about an integrated approach  
to resolving drinking water needs!



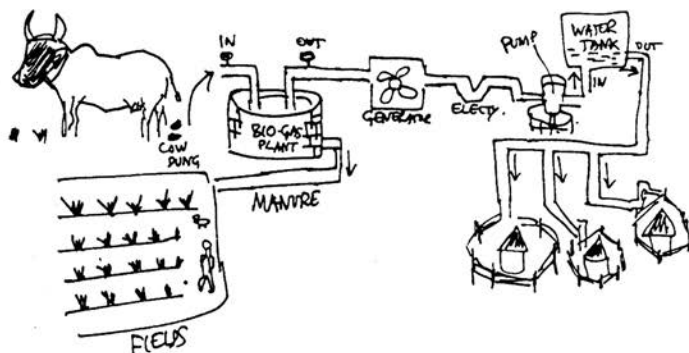
Once upon a time, the village of Ungra in southern Karnataka had a severe drinking water problem. Then they came upon a novel idea – an idea that could solve their drinking water problem and at the same time provide more livelihood opportunities. This integrated approach used appropriate technologies and village level participatory institutions.



I can see you have thrown in all the key words. You can surely arrange the funds, but will this really get you results?

In this case it was not merely empty words - they meant something... and it did produce results!

It all started with a biogas plant...



The farmers provided the cow dung for the plant. The amount each one of them provided was recorded and at the time of manuring the fields they could take back an equivalent amount of biogas slurry, which is richer than plain cow dung. The biogas produced was used to operate a generator and the electricity so produced was used to pump water to an overhead tank. From there water was distributed through pipes to each house (supplied for one hour each morning). Each night three hours of electricity was supplied to each house to light the house. If more water was available, it was used for growing fodder or for one or two critical waterings for a second crop.

### Who managed this system?

Who else? The village committee of course! Outside management just would not have worked. The village committee employed one person to maintain the whole system. In subsequent villages, the village not only offered to provide the land, but also a fair part of the labor and costs of setting up this system.

Obviously! Who wants to walk 2 hours to fetch water? Water at the doorstep is such a luxury!





## How does this impact on health?

If women are saved from the drudgery of collecting water, fodder and fuel by such collective arrangements, the gain to women and child health is considerable. Indeed, no other single factor contributes as much to child health in a poor household as the availability of the mother's time for childcare, and as much to women's health as the relief from the drudgery and exertion of her daily routine!

In this model we see many of the elements of the alternatives that we had outlined in the previous chapter.

## *Peoples Initiatives for Basic Amenities*

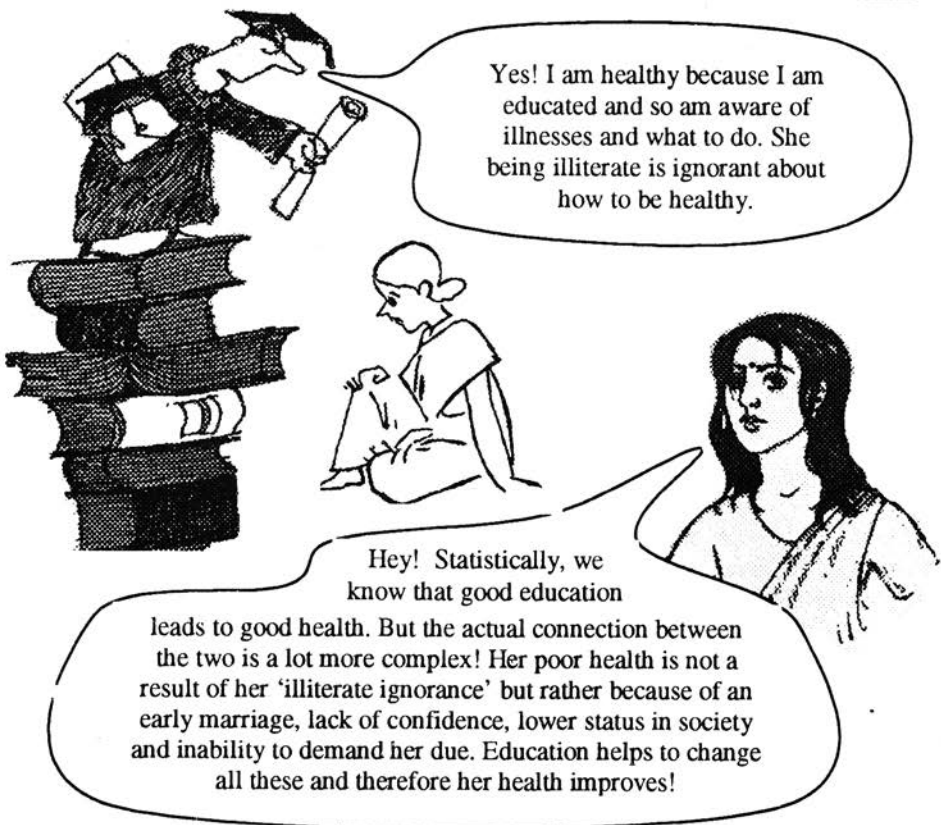
The central message from the above experiences is this...

It is not enough any longer to merely demand that the state should provide basic amenities. Local bodies and people's organizations must go beyond it to plan out what they need, how it should be provided and how it should be financed. In this, they should take the assistance of sensitized activists with technical knowledge and skills who can help them develop capabilities and provide them with technology choices. If making such plans and mobilization for their implementation becomes the main form of activism it will have a much better chance of making people's basic needs the central issue of political process and itself becomes part of the process of transformation.



## Basic Education

Societies where schooling is universal have much better indices of health than societies with large illiterate populations.



Most Studies have shown that with number of years of schooling there is a proportional reduction in infant mortality. The impact is most on women and child health and on fertility control. (Possibly because of an increase in the age of marriage and because educated women are able to exercise greater control over decisions concerning their bodies.)

The impact of education on health is only partly due to better access to information. Those with schooling do have more information on the causes of disease and the ways to prevent or cope with it. But this is only a small part of the explanation. Schooling also changes the attitude to oneself and the natural and social environment. The ability to respond to health problems and to seek to change circumstances that lead to ill health, instead of accepting it as part of a natural order of things (or as one's fate) is enhanced by schooling.

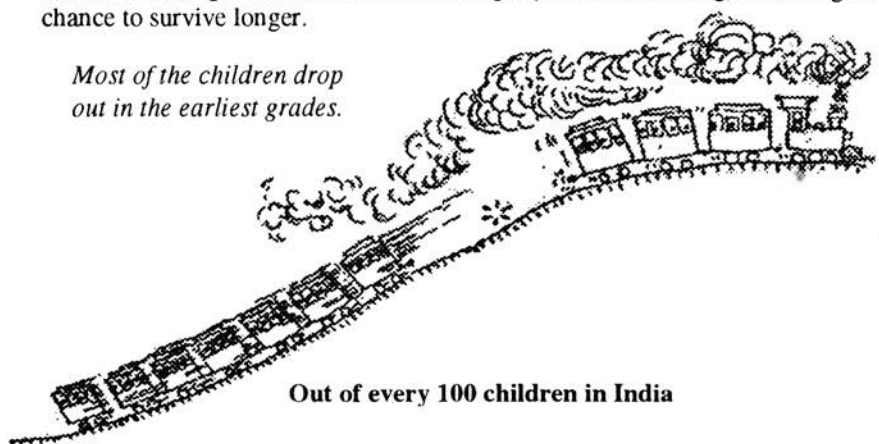
Irrespective of how exactly schooling acts to enhance health, the fact that it does so is undeniable. Moreover in its own right the universal elementary education is a goal for any modern society.

## The current crisis in schooling

Access to schooling has no doubt increased considerably over the last five decades. The number of villages without schools is now a relatively small minority. However this does not by itself mean that the goals of universal elementary education has been met. Not even universal primary education is anywhere near achievement. The central problems in school education now are the problems of dropouts and of attainment.

Any discussion on education in India needs to confront the distressing feature of very high dropout rates during the initial years of schooling. The inability of the system to retain children has been the major stumbling block in providing basic education to all. In fact if all children enrolled in primary schools proceeded to complete eight years of elementary education (as the writers of the Indian constitution had desired) the middle schools would have serious problems accommodating them. The ratio between middle and high schools is better, indicating that those who survive eight years of schooling have a higher chance to survive longer.

*Most of the children drop out in the earliest grades.*



50-60 enter primary schools. Of these, about 30-40 soon drop out.

20-25 enter middle school. Of these, a further 10-15 drop out.

5-10 enter higher secondary schools. 4-6 of these drop out.



40-50 do not enroll in schools at all



Only 1-2 eventually enter college.

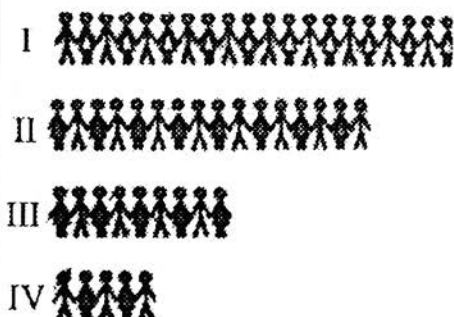


44% of children enrolled in Grade 1 leave before reaching Grade V, and 63% of those originally enrolled do not reach Grade VIII. This heavy rate of dropouts has remained stable over the last three decades.

**Dropout Rates During Primary and Middle School Years (percent)**

	Std. I-V	Std. V-VIII
1960-61	64.9	78.3
1970-71	67.0	77.9
1980-81	58.7	72.7
1990-91	44.3	63.4

*Selected Educational Statistics, GOI, 1995-96*



**Why do so many kids dropout!**



Because their parents send them to work.

Many say that. But it really can't be true. Most dropouts occur among younger children (6-8 years). Most (paid/unpaid) working children are older (10-14 years). How can the effect come before the cause?



Studies show that children's involvement in work is higher among girls (mainly unpaid domestic work). A study in rural Tamil Nadu suggested that girls spent on an average twice as much time working as boys. Another study in Ballia (UP) showed that in the 10-14 years age group, 15.8% of boys and

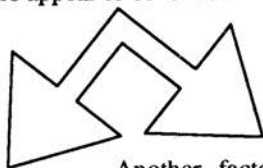
34.7% of girls were involved in unpaid domestic work, while 1.8% boys and 1.6% girls were involved in paid work. It needs to be understood that high drop out rates do not necessarily have to do with child labour.

Isn't it possible that children are put too work after they dropout to prevent idling?



Quite probable! What most studies indicate is that a general dissatisfaction with the education system (and not economic necessity) encourages parents to send their children to work rather than to school. There is also a widely held opinion that the completion of school will not ensure or enhance employment prospects.

Two major factors appear to contribute to the dropout rates.



In spite of govt. claims to the contrary, even poor families have to incur expenses to send their children to school right from the primary stage. 14.4% of students in rural areas and 49% of students in urban areas pay tuition fees in addition to other fees and non-fee expenses. A study indicates that on education, annual household expenditure ranged from Rs.385 in Maharashtra to Rs. 1,200 in Karnataka.

What then is the meaning of the constitutional provision of providing "free" education to all up to the age of 14 ?

Another factor that has a bearing on dropout rates is the quality of education imparted, the service conditions of teachers, the chronic paucity of non-salary expenditure and the facilities provided in government run schools. According to the Fifth All-India Education Survey:

- Barely half of all primary schools have a pucca building.
- 42% have a single classroom. Just over half have a useable blackboard and less than half have drinking water facilities.
- Gender disparity in education is reflected in the lower literacy rate among women - 39.3% literacy rate, for females against 64.1% among males (1991 census). This trend continues with much lower enrolment of girls at all levels, starting from the primary level. (See Table Below).

### Enrolment Up to Primary Level (in millions)

	Girls	Boys
1990-91	40.4	57.0
1991-92	42.3	59.0
1992-93	44.9	60.5
1993-94	46.4	61.8
1994-95	46.8	62.3

#### Schools as the worst form of Brain Drain...

Lack of Attainment is the term used to describe the huge number of children who sit through 5 years of education without learning to read or write or do simple calculations! One expects 8 to 10 years of education to be able to equip the child with some basic skills and knowledge. If this is nowhere near achieved then the purpose of schooling has been subverted. Many parents note that their child "is not able to learn" and withdraw the child from school.

This process on the social scale is a process by which social hierarchies are justified and legitimized.

The poor quality of education is not primarily a function of facilities provided. It is more a resultant of the pedagogy employed. The curriculum and school literature has a distinct urban, upper class and caste bias. This excludes children from poor rural families. Indeed, the children who do not continue in the system are largely drawn from families of landless agricultural labourers and poor peasants.



My parents think I keep failing because I am dumb. Please tell them it is not my failure, but rather the failure of the system. I could have developed competence in all areas of basic education, if the pedagogic approach was appropriate and adequate.



In the case of girls, an important factor leading to their non-enrollment and dropout is Sibling Care. This needs special mention because in this case an easy and effective intervention is possible through day care services.

With this background, let's look at the new policies that are being put in place as part of the liberalization agenda of the government...



## Impact of Liberalization

The entire social sector and in particular education has been adversely affected by the policies of liberalization pursued by the Indian State. This is reflected in the decrease in financial allocations in real terms.

But instead, the State and its allied intellectuals portray a positive linkage between the process of economic liberalization and elementary education.



We need less of the State and more of the market. Privatize not only higher but also elementary education. We will provide you some loans.

This neo-liberal path advised for our national policy (in the context of global knowledge wars) is a "survival of the fittest" approach, based on an extension of parental choice in a market of competing schools, colleges and universities. Since the funding for basic education has essentially to come from the State, the idea would be to create a quasi-market within which schools will compete. In a poor nation like India the goal would be to considerably reduce State expenditure by diluting the very notion of schooling, so that a bare minimum access is provided.

This reasoning is wrong! It assumes that all social groups come to the education market as equals. Where caste, class and gender disparities are rampant, the criterion of choice and competition provides a mechanism by which the middle classes become the only gainers. And this only helps to deepen the disparities.



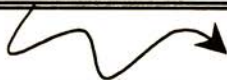
The consequences → The school system is getting further polarized in terms of social class and resources.



- The opening up of basic education to external aid.
- India was spending just over 3 per cent of its GDP on education in 1998. This in spite of the Indian State's repeated affirmation since the 1968 Kothari Commission report, to provide at least the recommended 6 per cent of GDP for education.



Even as late as 1992, simultaneous with the commencement of the liberalization process, the resolve was forcefully repeated at the Nine Country Summit on Education at New Delhi that the incremental increase in educational allocations would reach the 6 per cent figure by the year 2000.



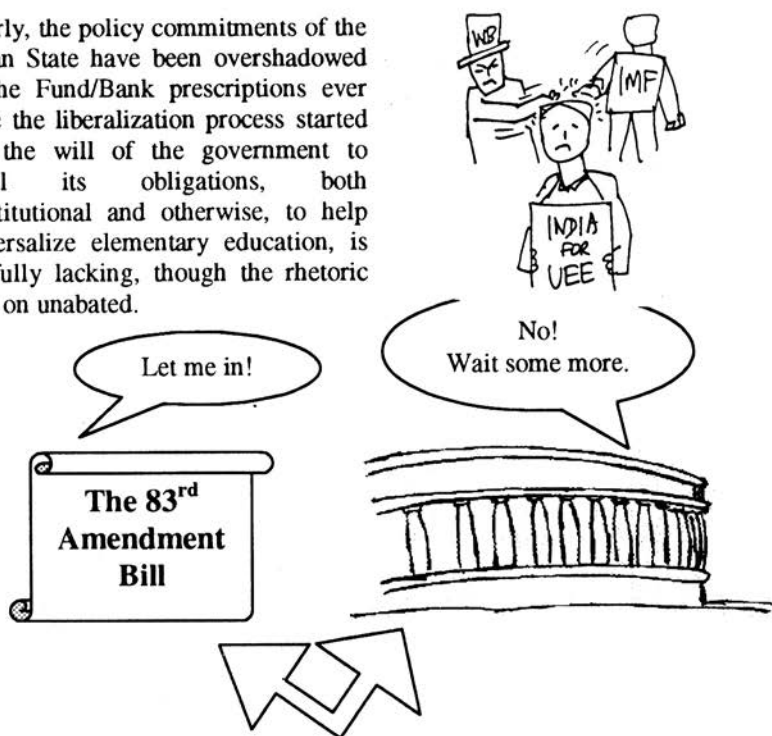
But still only 3% is spent!

I know that the SAP imposed through IMF lending, will cut spending on the social sector. But I can offer you our wonderful *Social Safety Net* Programme. You can use the soft loans from this programme for the District Primary Education Program (DPEP).



The Central government accepted the money in 1992 and set up the controversial DPEP. Though the funds account for a mere 4-5% of total expenditure on elementary education, it has nevertheless begun to dominate the setting up of agendas for basic education, in a variety of ways.

Clearly, the policy commitments of the Indian State have been overshadowed by the Fund/Bank prescriptions ever since the liberalization process started and the will of the government to fulfill its obligations, both constitutional and otherwise, to help universalize elementary education, is woefully lacking, though the rhetoric goes on unabated.



This proves the lack of will to universalize elementary education !

This bill, though controversially drafted, would provide an Indian citizen the Right to Education, and for the elementary stage, the government would be legally responsible for any failures to do so!

Obviously a much more stringent obligation of the State than provided by the directive principle that only exhorts the State to "endeavor to provide free and compulsory education to all the children up to age 14".



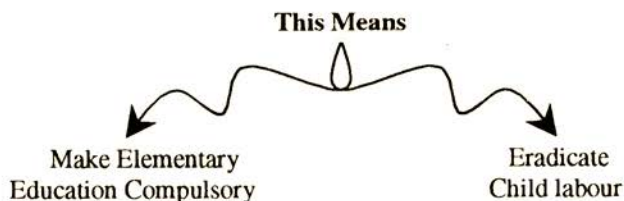
The State was directed to achieve this by 1960, but 40 years later nearly 50% (10 crore) children in the age group 6-14 are still out of schools!

Drafted during the tenure of the United Front govt. (1997), the bill could not be introduced before the ministry fell. The bill was accompanied by a financial commitment allocating Rs.40000 Crore for education in the Ninth Plan. The Eight Plan had allocated only Rs.20000 Crore! The passing of the bill with such a financial commitment would have been a major landmark in the government's commitment to basic education. The ministries that followed have quietly shelved the bill, informally citing inability to commit the kind of funds envisaged!



## *Policy Recommendations*

Enshrine Basic Education as a fundamental right and undertake all the legislative, administrative and financial tasks needed to achieve this.



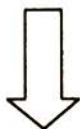
This also means:

1. Universal access to good quality school
2. Social security measures like the noon meal scheme and free textbooks scheme that make it possible for the poor to send their children to school
3. Availability and regulation of early childhood education and its acceptance as an integral part of 'education' - learning to learn, school preparedness, and later school retention.



And don't say  
"No Funds for this".  
Find the funds!

**The political  
implication of such  
an understanding**



**Plan economy with the central  
objective of finding the funds required  
for providing such education**

Instead of planning education according to the funds available  
in an economy planned with different goals in mind!

## *Peoples Initiatives for Basic Education*

Democratic movements have over the years been able to keep the policy recommendations on the agenda. To a large extent the expansion of schooling is a result of this. This task has to be sustained and strengthened.

But there is also urgent necessity for other forms of people's initiatives to address the main crisis of schooling - the issues of quality and of dropouts. There are many examples that we need to study in some detail. Two important examples are the work of the MV foundation in Ranga Reddy district and of the Ekalavya in Madhya Pradesh. The other is the experience of innovative government projects like Lok Jumbish. The Jeevanshala work of the BGVS is at an early stage. The KSSP and the TNSF has also done considerable work in this regard.

Some of the important directions features of these people's initiatives are:

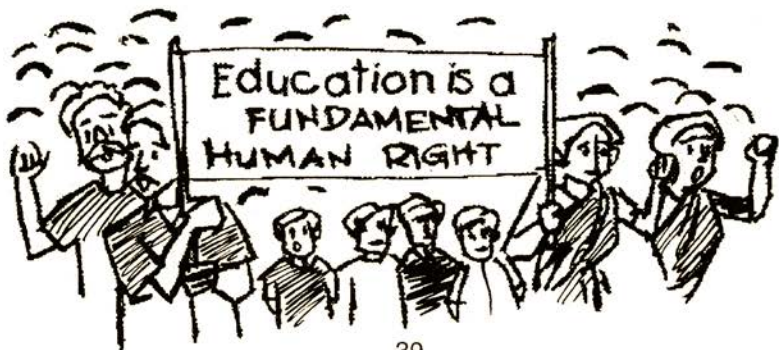
1. A focus on restructuring pedagogy whose central thrust is the training of teachers. The process also includes evolving more flexible, relevant and culturally appropriate syllabus. Another corollary of these interventions is to build up a network of teachers who are sensitised to the politics of pedagogy and work for and themselves use alternate pedagogies.
2. Involving communities in understanding the school and its crisis and helping them to contribute/take charge of the local school so as to make it more effective- in enrolment, in retention and in attainment.

In both of these directions an important issue to consider is:

Are we looking at these directions as some sort of model building, a better form of posing alternatives, so that the political-administrative system comes under democratic pressure to implement such changes over a wider area?

OR

Do we see a massive replication by people's movements across the nation as the main form in which such educational change will come? It is understood that in the latter scenario the state "develops the will" to cooperate with people's movements as part of the growth of public opinion in favour of this process.



# *The Ranga Reddy District Child Labour Abolition and Universal Elementary Education Programme*

## *A Case Study*

More than 100,000 children in 500 villages of Ranga Reddy District of Andhra Pradesh have been withdrawn from work and enrolled into school thanks to the MVF Foundation (MVF)'s work with them.

Ranga Reddy district is one of the most underdeveloped districts in the country and lies some distance from Hyderabad in the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh. Most children in this district were out of school, as is the situation in most such districts. 90% of such out-of school children worked in the farm sector as cattle-herds or farm herds or in domestic work. A large number of boys were working as bonded labourers. 10% of the children work in urban slums –in biscuit factories, in plastic and dye factories.

Relying mainly on community initiatives, the MVF program motivated parents and children to utilize the formal school as a medium for the child's advancement. Based on the principle that every child out of school is a working child, the program does not make any distinction between one form of child labour and another. It's one point agenda is to ensure no child goes to work and all go to school.

### **The strategy adopted** (Essentially based on age group and gender)

Older children in the age group 9 - 14 years are run through a bridge course, which utilizes what they already know to help them catch up with regular school children their age.

Younger children (6 to 8 years) are directly admitted to schools. In all cases, there is a detailed follow-up program, which ensures minimal drop out. For the girl child the approach, though broadly similar, is more intensive.

Over the years program has involved more and more sections of the local community. Today it encompasses, apart from the parents and children themselves, elected representatives, employers & government school teachers.

The MVF has been working on this for 9 years and the results are wonderful!





## What has been Achieved!

- The programmes operates in 2000 villages in this district.
- 160 villages are child labour free and in 400 villages all children below age of 11 years are in formal schools.
- Over 4000 bonded labours have been released .
- Over 10,000 youth participate as volunteers in this programme.

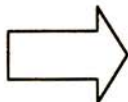
Wow! That's quite something!



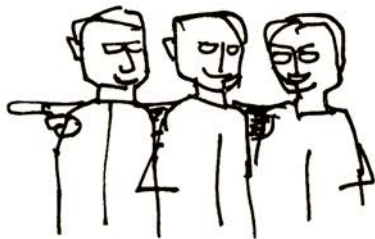
## Bridge Course

This is central to the MVF strategy. Children released from the work force, often as bonded labourers enter a 2 or 3-month residential camp conducted by specially trained youth where they receive an innovative bridge course. At the end of this period most children join class 4 or 5, in regular school. These children are in the 9 to 12 age group. Younger children, in the 6 to 8 age group can be put back in school without a bridge course, as there is a much smaller age gap.

Why not put the older children also in a smaller class instead of the bridge course?



Because we resent sitting with 6 year olds!



Also, the teachers find such a class difficult to handle. Trying to educate a working child at the end of a hard day's work in an evening NFE center is also not a desirable option. Hence the approach is to build the child up through a bridge course and get it back into the formal school.

Children in the 12 to 14 age group can be enrolled in class 5 after the three-month bridge course but the preference is to stay on in residential mode for 12 to 15 months and directly clear class VII public examination!

Don't go around thinking it was all easy!  
Getting the children to attend the bridge course required a lot of work at the level of the community and the family.



It is also helped by a few months of NFE center programmes. In these NFE centers however the focus is on games and songs and motivation building so that after a few months, they are ready to attend a bridge course and subsequently to go back to school.

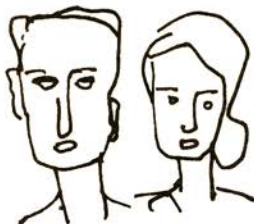
## Government School Teachers

The government school-teachers gradually began to evince interest in the process of teaching and learning in the camps, with thousands of such children joining government schools. As a result bridge courses are being implemented for older children in the formal school itself. At the same time the government teachers have thus an extended domain to cover even those children out of school. A forum for Liberation of Child Labour with the membership of 1300 teachers has been formed to work - for abolition of child labour. The teacher's active involvement in enrolling children and introducing innovative methods of teaching to retain them into schools has raised their self esteem and resulted in genuinely empowering them as teachers. A well organized supportive community plus local appointment of additional teachers on a part time basis (when class room strength increases temporarily to clear the back log), ensures that government schools now are enabled to deliver.

## Parents

The programme has demonstrated the fact that even the poorest parents have an intense desire to educate their children.

If we know our children will be well looked after at school, we don't mind making any sacrifice. After all we want our children to have a much better life than we had.



In most families the loss of child labour does not mean a major economic burden. But even where it is so, parents are generally willing to make the extra sacrifice. There are several instances where cattle and other livestock have been sold once the child was enrolled in school.

**Why didn't parents do this earlier?**

The programme showed the parents that their children could learn - this enormous increase in their confidence in the capabilities of their children was a very important factor for the success of the programme. Indeed the parents are beginning to enjoy parenthood in the process of their children becoming students.



## **Youth Activist**

The youth activists played the significant role of relentlessly pursuing every child's journey to school. In withdrawing 100,000 children from work and in negotiating their entry into school, the youth activist who identified himself/herself as a voluntary social worker and member of a social movement, made the critical difference. Being themselves first generation literates, they understood the predicament of a child labour. They exposed all the myths surrounding the issue of child labour and schooling. Their ability to question and bring pressure on the authorities as well as on employers of child labour brought a militancy to the programme.

## **Community**

The programme saw a significant and unprecedented participation of the community in the process of schooling. The community not only played a key role in sustaining motivation of individual parents and teachers but also contributed significantly in financial terms. In most schools rather than wait for the government to supplement the infrastructure, the community came forward to support additional teachers as well as to contribute funds for expanding the school building. Much of the success has been the result active participation of the community in managing the programme.

Community pressure was also important in changing the attitude of the employers towards children. As the worker role for a child became a less and less acceptable within the community, employers found it more and more difficult to employ children. In fact community pressure has resulted in employers voluntarily sponsoring children working with them for enrolment in schools and bridge courses. With the decline in availability of children to work in their fields, larger landlords have been forced to change cropping patterns

## **Other Agencies**

The project also resulted in significant changes in the pattern of thinking both in the govt. & in NGOs. Firstly, it brought about a realization in AP that there is a wide gap between the expectations of the parents and the availability of educational infrastructure, particularly the teacher. It has highlighted the fact that nothing is inevitable about the existence of child labour in rural areas and that it is largely a problem of poor management and motivation. The MVF model with its emphasis on bridge courses has been instrumental in inspiring large-scale programs like the back-to-school programmes run by AP Govt.

The MVF Model has also highlighted the severe limitations of the Non Formal Education approach that has symbolized much of the govt.'s policies in the past. The program has also highlighted that the best way to get support for withdrawing children from work is to enroll them in full time formal schools. This is evident from the programs for child labor drawn up under the NCLP programs, which has a strong component of education.

The MVF model has inspired similar ventures in Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Calcutta.



# The Jeevanshala Programme – A Case Study

## During the Literacy Campaigns...

You are teaching us to read and write.  
But can't you start something for my  
daughter - she has dropped out of school.



Responding to this demand from the literacy classes for better school education services, the BGVS started a number of initiatives for quality improvement in school education and for addressing the needs of drop out and working children.

## Improving the Quality of School Education

In 1994, the BGVS initiated the nation wide *Joy of Learning* campaign and a series of teacher training workshops. The programme design was drawn from the rich experience of teacher training and pedagogic innovation that the people's science movements have built up over the years.

Hey! Learning by doing  
is so much fun!

The most important of  
these experiences was the  
EKALAVYA programme.



Ekalavya itself drew upon the earlier path breaking Hoshangabad Science teaching programme. Eklavya was set up as a resource center to train school-teachers in government schools of Madhya Pradesh, initially in one district and later expanding to over 15 of districts.

The focus was initially on science teaching in the middle and high school but later expanded to other subjects and to primary schools.



The teacher training camps the guidebooks for the teachers and the syllabus developed, not only made a considerable improvement in the quality of education but went on to become a model in content development and pedagogic innovation and teacher training for many subsequent programmes.



And don't forget the work of David Horsborough and the innovative schools set up by the volunteers trained by him.

They are another major source for pedagogic innovation and content development. The Narasimhans in Chittor district and the Digantar school of Jaipur are some examples of this.

These experiences were also drawn upon by the BGVS. Today, across the country, the Science Movement led initiatives like teacher training, production of creative supplementary training material and conduct of supplementary educational activities (like Children's Festivals), contribute to quality improvement in school education. The understanding that inspires these sustained, patient & expanding efforts is that underlying issues of quality is the larger question of educational goals - whether education is seen as empowering & developing the creative talents of the child or whether it is geared to producing unquestioning citizens in an unequal & unjust society.

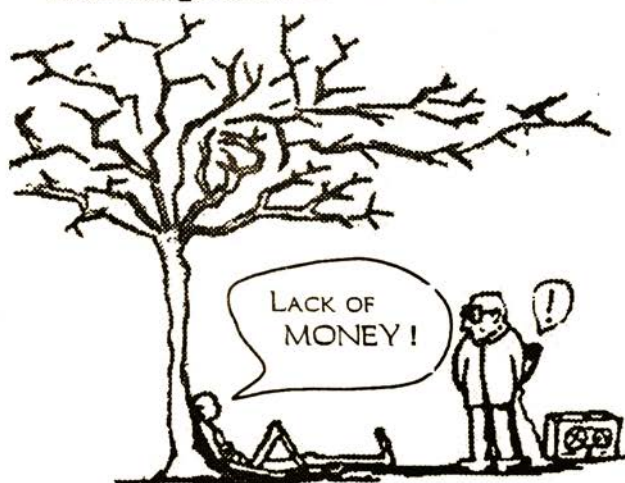
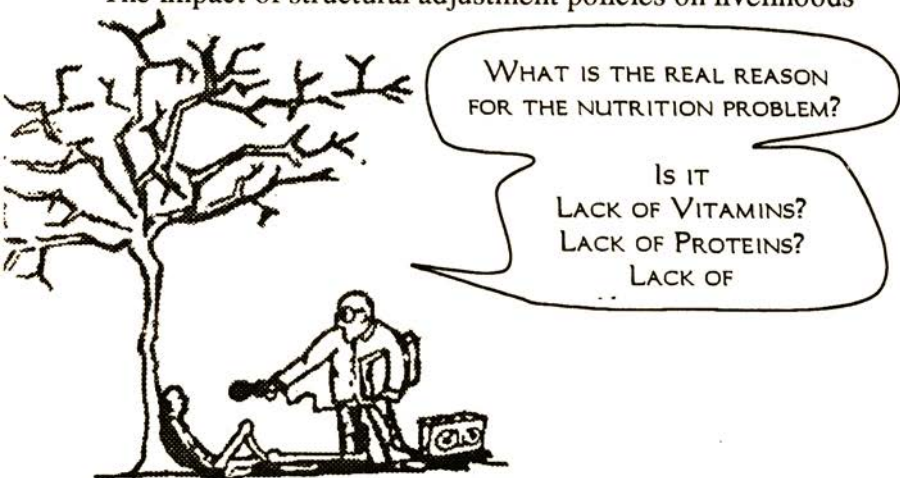
### **The Jeevanshala Approach to Non-Formal education**

For out-of-school children, "non-formal education of a different kind" was mooted. The Jeevanshala had the twin objectives of providing life based education to non-school going children, while ensuring that they move back to regular schools. The spirit of the mass campaign was central to its implementation though the programme looked at a block as the unit. The pilot programmes were started in Wyrā block (AP), Samalkha (Haryana), Navada (Bihar) and Akkallua (Maharashtra). Village level surveys identified the out of school children and their current educational level. Then followed dialogues with panchayats & mass mobilization through kalajathas, village festivals & childrens festivals. This enthused the community and gave it the confidence to participate in this initiative. Organizational structures where the village could participate were set up. Then the NFE centers started functioning. In a few villages, Jeevanshalas were completely supported by the panchayat. In the above 4 blocks 1000 to 2000 students now attend the NFE centers. At the beginning of the campaign and after that periodically children who could attend formal school were put back in school. Only those who needed to continue in these centers did so.



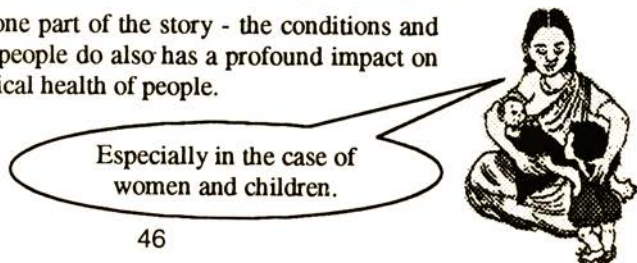
# Securing People's Livelihoods

The impact of structural adjustment policies on livelihoods



Proper nutrition, food, water, sanitation, medical benefits and other such factors that make for a healthy life are all a function of steady employment and an income that is commensurate with the rise in prices of goods and services.

But money is only one part of the story - the conditions and nature of work that people do also has a profound impact on their mental & physical health of people.



Security of livelihood, the conditions of work and the nature of employment depend on both environmental and macro-economic factors. The casualization of labour after economic reforms & the expansion of the unorganised sector have led to precarious conditions of work and the lack of social safety nets for a large section of the population. This has had a direct impact on the quality of life. At the same time the structural adjustment policies have led to increase in prices of food grains & move to privatise all services. In the era of fluctuating incomes these developments have worsened living conditions.

Degradation of the natural resource base has led to declining productivity of land & degradation of water sources, affecting our food security & drinking water. Deforestation has led to increasing heat & pollution levels.

This chapter looks at livelihood issues – particularly how they affect health.

## Employment Insecurity

The rate of employment has declined from 1.44% in 1991 to 0.67% in 1997. The post-reform period has seen an increase in the unorganised sector and therefore a growing level of job insecurity. The worsening conditions of work are also reflected in the nature of employment that people are seeking.

### What is a Successful Economy?

To many economists the central measure of success in economics is growth. This means more production and more total income. The measure of this is the GDP which is the sum total of everyone's income.

To the majority of the ordinary people a successful economy means: Their livelihoods are safe and there is an expansion of employment opportunities.

If a modern oil mill starts functioning & increases the production of edible oil by a factor of ten, the GDP would rise. But since such a mill would destroy the livelihoods of thousands of rural families, they would hate such growth.

Let's say the production of luxury cars has increased India's GDP. A modern car factory employs only about 600 persons - far far less than the number of peasant families the factory would displace. But GDP would increase enormously because of the factory. Remember that the government acquires land for such a factory compulsorily and so the farmers cannot refuse to sell. Of course, some persons would get employed as drivers and car mechanics, and even for selling toys to hang in the cars. But the quality of these jobs is different from ones lost. More importantly, the employment of many is now centered around the luxury consumption of a few!



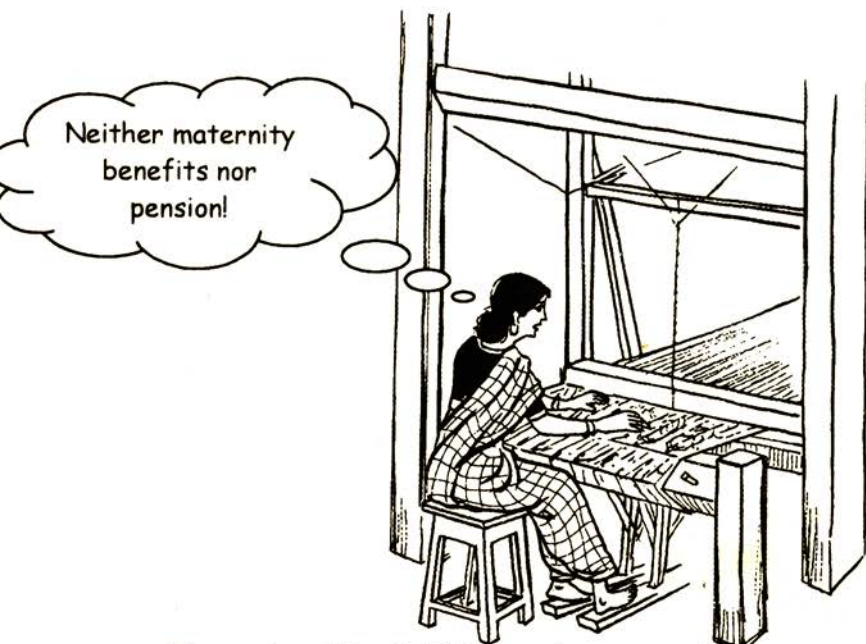
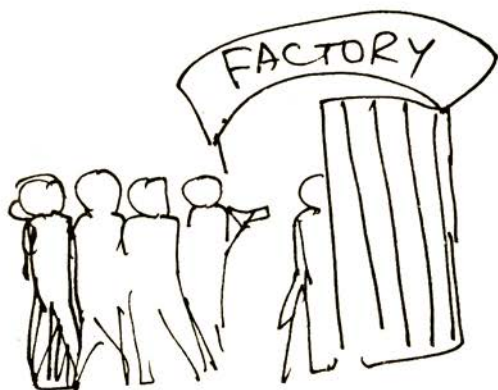
Damn Car!  
Ruined our lives.



Some of the major features of employment insecurity are:

## Shrinking of the Organised Sector

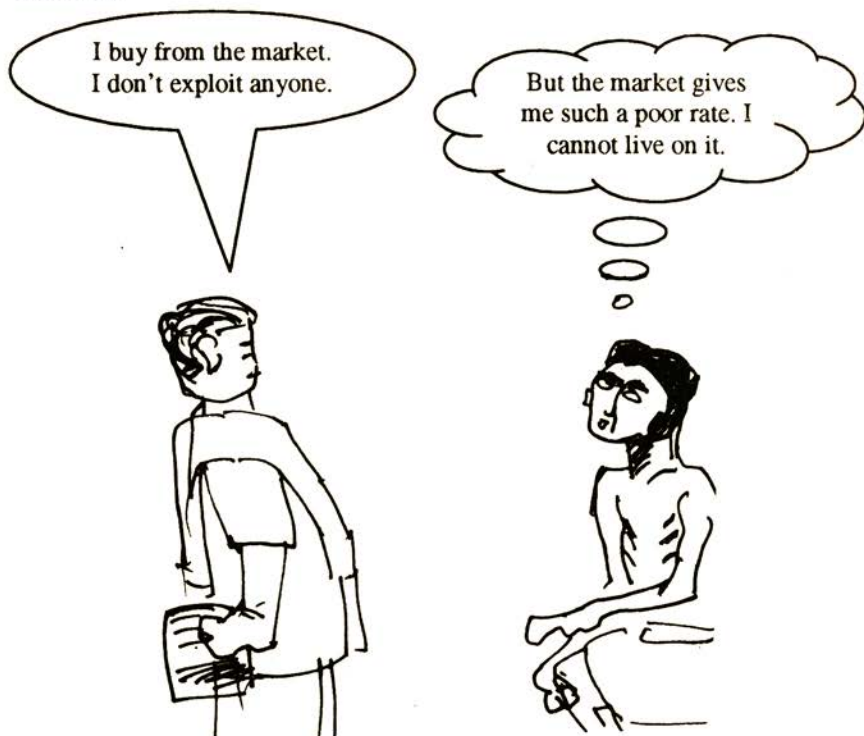
The growth of the organised sector has experienced regression in the last 2 decades. Whereas the growth rate of the organised sector was about 2.5% in the 1970s it came down to around 1.5% in the 1980s and was around 1% in the post reform period i.e., 1990s. Between 1990 and 1998 the employment in the organised sector decreased from 9.4% to 8.5 %. This means that less than 10% of the population had access to social benefits like provident fund, medical and paid leave, maternity benefits, medical reimbursements etc.



The rent and the light too are her expense!

## Casualization of Labour

Given the above-mentioned fact, it is clear that about 90% of the people in the country depend on employment in the unorganised sector. However workers in the unorganised sector also need to be differentiated according to the duration and security of employment. The National Sample Survey has divided the work force into three broad categories: the usual workers, the weekly workers and daily workers who work on a person-day basis. A usual worker is one who works most of the 365 days in one year. This type of worker can be divided into principal and subsidiary workers. The principal workers are those who have stable employment throughout the year. The nature of work that they do can be divided into three - regular, self-employed and casually employed. Casual employment denotes regular work at piece-meal or informal terms. The post-reform period has seen a growth in casual employment. The percentage of people under regular employment has decreased from 61.4% to 54.8% between 1972-94. In the same period the people availing of casual employment increased from 23.2% to 32%. This means that increasing number of people are faced with restrictions on demanding any formal benefits of employment since the relationship between the employer and employee is usually non-contractual and informal in character.



## Feminisation of the Labour Force

Casualization of labour has increased for women at a higher rate and about 60% of the women work in the casual workforce. In contrast less than half of the male workers belong to the casual workforce. The work participation of women has increased from 22% to 28% between 1991-97. Evidence from India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and other countries suggest that more and more women are being employed in services that require cheap labour. These occupations include home-based domestic work and on construction sites. The trend in the post-reform period is increasingly towards the temporary and contractual employment for women on unfair wages and with inappropriate and inferior conditions of work including lack of maternity benefits and childcare.



Employ only Men.  
No maternity benefits!



Employ only Women.  
Men will not work for so little!

The 1991 census states that there are only 1 million home-based women workers. But in the Bidi industry alone, 2.5 million women work at home. The handloom sector has another 4 million. These apart, millions work to produce ready-made garments, electronics, papad, agarbatti, vattal, pickles and several other such commodities. But, they are neither counted, nor registered anywhere as workers. Their services are taken for granted.

In the organized sector where the state has been the biggest employer of women, recruitment freeze has affected women's employment adversely. Many undertakings like Coal India are retrenching women.

Privatization has led to casualization of the workforce. In essential services like sanitation, women constitute 30-40% of the workforce. 1 million women work in Aanganwadis. Instead of treating these workers as regular employees, the plan is to hand over the management of such services to private institutions. In areas of employment where women predominate, like nursing or school teaching, the conditions are deplorable. The recommended ratio is one nurse for five patients but in reality it is 1:40 or even more.

*Source: Alternative Economic survey-1998-99*



## Retrogression in Employment

Job insecurity is one of the factors that lead to unstable lifestyles and ill health. Job insecurity increases as existing jobs in industrial and agricultural sectors declines. Let's look at some of the major causes of loss of livelihoods...

### 1. Farmers can no longer farm !

Because they have lost their land, or because they just decided to stop cultivating it.

Decided to stop?  
But why?



Because there is no money in agriculture for the poor!  
How can I repay my debts with such high prices of cultivation and such poor prices for the produce?



- Liberalization has brought more than 800 goods under Open General License (OGL) and removed Quantitative Restriction (QR) on 714 items – this has affected the farmer most.
- Import of Rubber made lakhs of small planters and rubber tappers poor when the cost of rubber came down to less than 50%. Big planters have stopped tapping rendering the laborers (tappers) jobless.
- The market is flooded with Chinese Garlic (big ones) up to the village level, leaving the farmers in the hills of Tamilnadu and plains of Rajasthan poverty stricken.
- The poultry owners of Namakkal in Tamilnadu and the other parts of country are no match for the chicken legs imported at a throw-away price from USA. (Rs. 28 whereas in India production cost alone is Rs.32/-). Many units have closed down.
- The same is going to happen to the Apple and Orange growers with the import of these items from Australia, New Zealand and other countries.
- The tea plantation workers of Assam are going to be affected soon due to the competition from our neighbors as the import has just started. In April 2000, more than a lakh of people participated in an agitation in Nilgiris demanding a ban on imports.
- QR has been removed even for fish, fish products, tea, coffee, milk, spices, vegetables, rubber products etc. In milk products alone, millions of women dairy workers will be affected.



## 2. And non-farm rural employment has been destroyed!

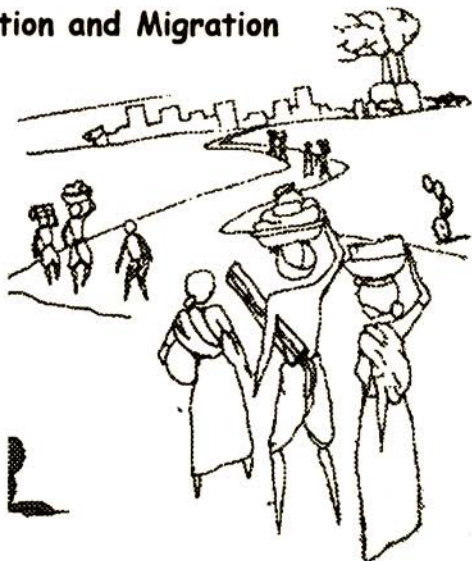
In the past, there were numerous trades, handicrafts and artisans at the village. Now they are all closing down. Gone are the oil presses & wheat mills. The blacksmiths disappear as the corporates make implements. Gone are all the small bakeries & milk product-makers. Now one can buy Australian wheat & fruit juice and European dairy products, but at the cost of these rural families!

## 3. And no industries come up in their place in the cities!

When the Economic reforms started in 1991 the nation was assured that after 5 years things will improve. The Economy will flourish. But now, 10 years later - the MNCs and the Indian Rich are flourishing. So is the top 10% of the population. Pepsi and Coke have taken over. Thumps up, Limca & Goldspot have eradicated the local soft drinks manufacturers. Gillette came in and Malhotra's are gone. Hindustan Lever has taken over TOMCO, Ponds, Kissan, Brooke Bond & Lipton. Now they control the Cosmetics, Food & Beverages market [Fast Moving Consumer Goods - their turnover is Rs.15,000 Cr.]. Even the public sector's modern food has been swallowed. Smithline Beachem has taken over Viva and Maltova & now controls 80% of the market in their field.

## Urbanisation and Migration

As labour becomes more casualized and jobs are lost in rural areas there is growing urbanization. This urbanization is not due to industrial growth in the cities. Rather it is distress migration of the rural poor to urban areas, seeking wage employment in service sectors, in construction labour or other forms of daily wage labour. Thus urbanization is largely the growth of the urban poor.



A report on *India's Urban Sector* (1998) by the National Institute of Urban Affairs has

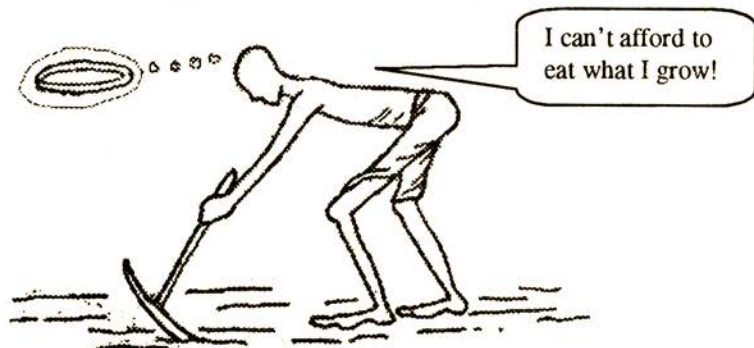
shown that there has been an alarming increase in the rate of urbanisation in the last two decades. The rate of migration has increased from 15.2 in 1971 to 17.4 in 1991. All indications are that they are increasing. The number of people living in urban areas has doubled from 78.9 million in 1951 to 159.5 million. Though no substantial estimates are available for the post-reform period, all reports indicate that these trends will only increase with reforms. The increase in the urban population and the regression in the economy of the 1990s have also led to insecurity of wage employment compelling the poor to accept below poverty wages and to work overtime.

## Natural Resources and Employment Security

Employment opportunities are affected by Ecological Degradation and by the changes in access to these depleted natural resources and by the changed pattern of use of these resources. Some examples of these are given below:

### Agriculture

Agricultural production of food grains declined markedly in the post-reform period. The average growth of the foodgrain output was 3.4 between 1980-81 and 1990-91. This declined to 1.4 between 1990-91 and 1997-98. Pulses and coarse cereals (the food of the poor) registered negative growth rates of -1.3 and -0.7 respectively in the post-reform period. These crops were replaced by commercial crops that required high-cost inputs. Since this was not possible on small-holdings, it led to the loss of land by the small and marginal farmers.



The increasing casualisation of labour in the rural sector in the post-reform period can be attributed to this factor. Further, the degradation of these lands is also taking place at a fast rate, as the small farmer cannot afford to experiment with new technologies. The lowering of ground water level and the problem of irrigation has also led to degradation of marginal lands. 40% of marginal agricultural lands are degraded and small and marginal farmers own many of these holdings. Therefore many farmers are forced to depend on seasonal employment to make the two ends meet.

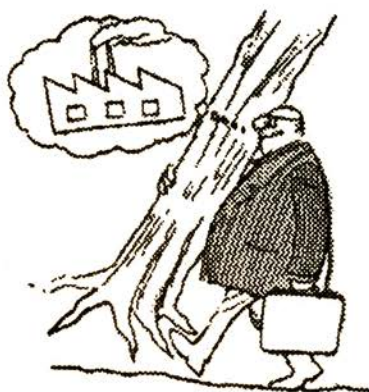
### Forests and Watersheds

Apart from providing seasonal employment, energy and fodder inputs to the rural poor, the forests are also protectors of the ecological security of the country. They protect the water flow from the hills into the plains and also save lands from soil erosion and degradation. Because of this it has been recommended that 33% of the area in the plains and 66% of the area in the hills should be kept afforested.





However, this has not been the case in our country. In 1987 only 23.8% of the total area was recorded as forest and this has declined to 19.7% in the 1990s. India has lost 90% of its frontier forests and 57% of what remains is endangered despite the introduction of Joint Forest Management and other programmes. The failure to evolve programmes that will arrest deforestation will affect not only the health of water sources and agricultural lands but will also impact upon climate and productivity. Further the erosion of the forest base will lead to the shrinking of supply of fuel-wood and fodder that give the rural poor some supplementary income.



Save us from the rich. The poor have always protected us, as we have them.



## Decline in Real Wages and Increasing Poverty

The real wages (adjusted against inflation and price rise) of the workforce have generally declined in the post-reform period. This means that income poverty has increased.

Let's look at some data...

1975: a little more than 50% of India below poverty line.

1997: 37.2% below poverty line

This means annual rate of decline of poverty – only 0.9%!



Why?

Because the post reform period saw a considerable slowdown in the decline of the number of people living below the poverty line. In fact in 1995-97, instead of declining the numbers below poverty line increased!

Let's see how this relates to changes in the real wages...

The latest economic survey shows a decline of 2.1% in the real wages of the agricultural labourer (the bulk of the workforce). In the industrial sector too, the workforce has seen an average decline in real wages of 2.45% between 1989-93.



## Grim Facts

- 400 million people live in poverty.
- 6 Crore people (16% of the population) have a daily income of only three rupees!

- The first Human Development Report prepared for India

Starvation deaths are increasing:

- In 1994, in Amaravati (Maharashtra) there were 613 such deaths
- In 1996 the number increased to 829.
- The recent spate of suicides by cotton growing peasants in Maharashtra, Punjab etc. are yet another example of increasing poverty.



And what is the government saying about all this?

The government is refusing to accept it. It says "There is No Alternative! If the economy grows somehow things will become OK."

Outrageous! The evidence against SAP is so clear now - refusing to see it will only increase poverty and lead the country towards ruin.

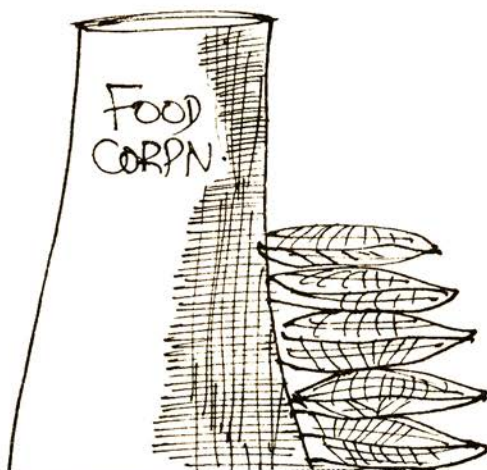
## Rising Prices of Essential Commodities

Along with declining real wages the lower class consumer is faced with rising prices in the post-reform period. The consumer price index (i.e. actual prices adjusted against the purchasing power of the consumer) has risen to double-digit figures for industrial workers, agricultural workers as well as urban employees in the service sector. The inflation rates recorded for the year 1998-99 are 13.2%, 11.0% and 11.3% respectively. The percentage of increase in inflation since 1991 is 1.6% for industrial workers, 3.9% for agricultural workers and 0.3% for urban service sector workers. The inflation for industrial workers and the workers in the service sector is partially relieved through access to the PDS system - but this is also under threat today.



## Dismantling of the Public Distribution System

At the best of times the outreach of the PDS was limited, especially in rural areas. This coverage had decreased from 15.3% in 1951 to 9.1% in 1995. Now the problem is further compounded by marked increases in PDS prices and a curtailing of its outreach. It is true that the PDS often did not reach the really poor, but instead of extending its outreach, the current approach has only weakened it further. Now the food corporation godowns are overflowing with grains, even as the poor starve. Add to this, the increased prices of kerosene & LPG and the cost of food rises further. 64% of the rural household expenses & 54% of the urban household's expenses go to food alone.



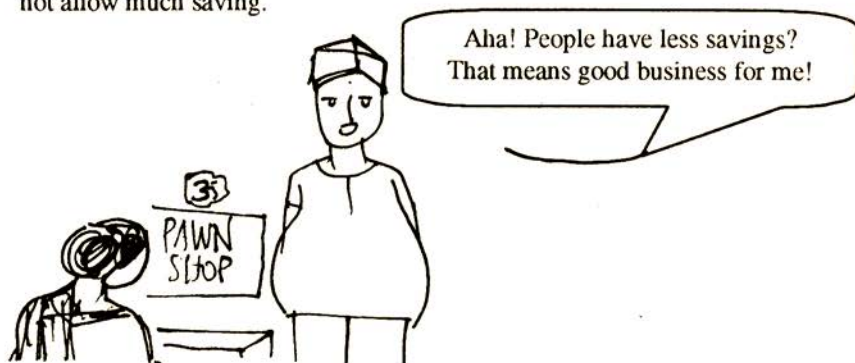
When the Targeted Public Distribution Scheme (TPDS) was announced for giving cheaper food grains to people living Below Poverty Line (BPL), the state governments were given a freehand to lower the limits of BPL. Thus, in Delhi, according to the then Chief Minister, Mr. Sahib Singh Verma, not a single family qualified for the TPDS. In Maharashtra, this limit was lowered to Rs.4,000 p.a. In Dharavi (Mumbai) Asia's largest slum, only a few families were identified for TPDS Card. In the face of growing inflation, when more and more people need access to cheaper food grains, large sections of population is denied precisely the same. Given the predominant patriarchal family system, it is the women who eat last and are first to suffer from malnutrition in conditions of food scarcity.

- Alternate Economic Survey -1998-99



## Savings and the Capacity to Cope with Unforeseen Circumstances

Given the increasing cost of living, the decline in real wages, and the slowdown in decline in poverty, the ordinary person's capacity to save is minimal. There is some possibility of forced savings under the provident fund for those who have regular employment in the organised sector. However, this prospect does not exist for workers in the unorganised sector. There are no estimates for the amount of savings in this sector and it is quite safe to assume that the correlation between the cost of living and decline in real wages does not allow much saving.



In urban areas, poor people are borrowing more to spend on health rather than for any other purpose. In the organised sector too, the Pension and Provident Fund schemes are being subverted through the reform process.

Recently, the Government has decided to risk the provident fund money in the stock market in order to enhance its income! Provident fund is supposed to be secure – to protect the employee in need. Taking that and playing the stock market is really a complete breach of faith.



In the absence of savings and a weakened social sector – the poor can no longer cope with misfortune, of health, natural disasters or declining fortunes. Whether it is drought or cyclone or an epidemic, the poor pay a terrible price!



## Impact of Current Trends on Health

We have seen how in the post-reform period, the capacity of people to provide a secure life for their families has been eroded considerably.

Now what does this imply for the health of the society and its citizens?

An important point to note is that though the impact on the whole population has been quite adverse, the severity of the impact is seen more in women who are also affected by the liberalisation process to a greater extent.

### Implication for Nutrition

Employment & wage insecurity has taken its toll on the nutrition status of the country.

Why? Because half of the country is eating less than they should. Women & children are most affected. In many poor families, every day pregnant women eat 500 kilo calories less than what they need!



This has led to a high incidence of low birth weight babies.

Study by Madura Swaminathan says...  
1991-92: 44.2% couldn't afford a full meal.  
1993-94: 47.7% couldn't afford a full meal!

52% of severely malnourished women, 42.2% of moderately malnourished and 37.1% of mildly under-nourished women have low birth weight babies.

I don't know about you, but for me the reforms have been really bad!

As far as children are concerned, the NNMB data on nutrition of pre-school children in urban areas reveals that **only 10% of such children have a normal nutrition status**. The rest are faced with mild, moderate or severe malnutrition. The decline in severe malnutrition has slowed down after the reforms. If we see the entire post-reform period till 1995 than the decline in severe nutrition is only by 1.5 percent as compared to 4 per cent between 1979 and 1990.



## Conditions of Work

One of the most destructive impacts of economic liberalisation has been the withdrawal of the state from the social sector.

### What this means...

1. The state will no longer even attempt to provide welfare services to labourers in the informal sector.
2. Social security benefits are confined to a very few people in the unorganised sector.
3. No regulation of working hours, amount of wages paid and the conditions of work amongst unregistered labourers.

The case of child labourers employed in hazardous industries is particularly alarming since there are rules governing this aspect of employment. The often reported deaths of children working in chemical industries, fires in congested workplaces and other such incidents only show that we need better state interference and not less of state control.



In the wake of the expansion of the unorganised sector, women have also suffered immensely. A study by the National Institute of Urban Affairs shows that on an average most women spent 7 hours outside the house and 4 hours working inside the house thus making their workload 11-12 hours per day. This puts a triple burden of working inside the house, outside it and looking after children. Most women do not even get maternity benefits and start working one month after their child is born. This also jeopardises the health of the child. Now with mobility of labour and increasing tendency of people to live in nuclear families, women need more institutional support to survive these stress conditions.

These are only a few examples of the ways in which the employment and wage security impact upon the health of a nation and its citizens.



## Poverty Alleviation

### Government Schemes and Allocation

Till 1997, the Integrated Rural Development Programme and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana were the main poverty alleviation schemes. However it was often felt that these schemes did not meet their targets because a central authority administered them and all planning was done in a centralised way. The main focus of these schemes was to bring about rural development through the creation of employment opportunities.

But most beneficiaries identified were not below the poverty line. The grant given was insufficient to start an enterprise. A new enterprise requires training and management support and markets. But there was no provision for this. They were extremely good at choosing inappropriate enterprise and technology! Not surprising that very little poverty alleviation occurred.



In 1997, these schemes were merged into Swarna Jayanti Swarozgar Yojana that aimed to finance self-help groups that would also run micro enterprises to sustain themselves. The main aim of this scheme seems to be to help people to sustain themselves in the advent of the withdrawal of the state from the welfare sector. For instance, in the 1999-2000 budget the funds allocated for rural development was reduced by 6%. Budgetary allocations to deal with urban poverty have also been reduced by 13%.

The implementation of the micro-watershed programmes is to be the responsibility of the NABARD - a Central agency - for which an allocation of Rs.50 crore is made in the 1999-2000 Budget.

The NABARD is to seek the help of *Gram Panchayats, Local Self help Groups and NGOs* for implementing the programme. The fact that the programme is not compulsively routed through the Gram Panchayats (via the State governments, with earmarked allocations) raises suspicions.

India has more than 5 lakh villages, and the number of Gram Panchayats is close to 40,000. A beginning is to be made in 100 districts (which have not been specified). Let us assume these 100 districts would have some 10,000 Panchayats. A Gram Panchayat may have (on an average) 5-10 villages. Pro rata, this works out to Rs.50,000 per Gram Panchayat, or Rs.5000 - 10,000 per village.

It is not clear as to what kind of watershed programmes are conceived of, with the allocation of such meager funds.

- Alternative Economic Survey, 1998-99



# *Fighting Back*

## *Building Alternatives for Securing Livelihoods*

### **The Focus**

When we plan for community action or people's initiatives (as distinct from advocacy and agitation action) in the area of livelihoods such action needs to be focused on the unorganized sector.



Growth consequent to the industrialization, or more precisely growth in the organized industrial sector has not been the major source of growth in employment.

Look at employment in the nineties - the population rose by 1.8% per annum and the growth of the workforce (because of changing age composition) was even higher - at about 2% per annum. But the rate of growth of employment in all sectors was less than 1% per annum. The number of main workers would have reached at least 333 million by 1998. But employment in the organized sector is seen to have increased over this same period from 26.8 million to 28.3 million, which is a decrease from 9.4% of the work force to 8.5% of the workforce. This, despite the nineties being touted as a decade of market driven, globalization based growth.

Where are the millions then employed? Mainly in the unorganized sector - the micro sector and in primary production. It is here that we must start work to build an alternate path of development. A path where everyone is assured a livelihood with dignity and without drudgery.

### **Reconceptualizing the Micro Sector**

1. Providing livelihoods means transforming this sector from being an unorganized sector to being a powerful, organized and networked sector. It must develop the power to withstand competition from the global multinationals and assure a decent quality of life to those dependent on it for their livelihoods.
2. Micro enterprises producing goods and services can be considered not as measures for poverty alleviation, but as nuclei of future economic formations. Micro can become macro and even global in a different way,

through a system of interrelations extending to all fields of social existence - production and exchange of goods and services, finance, marketing, intermediate production etc.

3. Building a macro network of micro enterprises requires large scale transfers of skills - for better finance, better management, better marketing, better technologies and so on. This is a challenge.
4. Building markets would require capturing markets from larger players as well as creating new markets through redistributive growth and new products. The impact of the media in favour of the larger players can be counteracted through consumer education, better product quality, cheapness, improved consumer services, local patriotism etc.

## **Redesigning Poverty Alleviation Programmes**

The plethora of poverty alleviation programmes of the state and central governments can be converged and synergized to raise the poor above poverty line sustainably. The resources involved in these programmes are not small. But they have seldom been used intelligently. Practically only a few have risen from BPL to APL making use of these resources. Yet it can be done. By a judicious and intelligent combination of governmental subsidies, institutional loans and own small savings (through savings groups) substantial capital can be raised to set up small and medium community enterprises. But of course they may require considerable assistance to do so - assistance for technology, for marketing, for management etc.

## **Organizing and Networking**

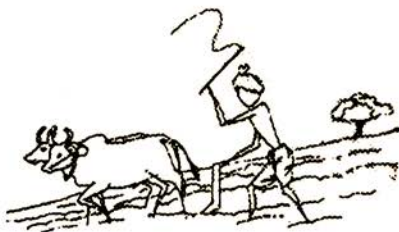
The creation of such a large network of enterprises needs the creation of organizational networks. One form of organizing could be Geographical Neighborhoods. Women, dalits, agricultural laborers, peasants are other platforms for organizing. In recent times, the potential of small neighborhood women's groups to come together for savings and household credit needs and then move on to serving financial needs of home based occupations has become universally recognized. These groups help poor women develop capabilities at a pace and rate of growth which they find comfortable and which they can balance with their existing commitments. Many more such organizational forms for other sections and other purposes based on these general principles are possible and necessary. We should also study the co-operatives of Gujarat and other places and suggest viable, vibrant models. Amul is one that has to be analyzed and seen whether this can be applied to other sectors.





## Banking on Biomass

70% of the population still depends on agriculture. So the basis for much of the increased manufacture is on the increased production of biomass. Biomass has an enormous capability both as energy source and as raw material for manufacture. Biomass, unlike other minerals as raw materials, is renewable.



Production of food, fodder, fiber, energy and chemicals and materials based on biomass is now technically feasible and socially desirable. The increased production of diverse biomass to suit various needs with available land and water (and air and sun) has also the potential to generate livelihoods for millions. Today much land is wasted and almost all land is degraded. Yet this need not be so. There are enough examples to show that with the local community's involvement and with a combination of people's wisdom and science and technology even the worst land can be greened and enough food fodder and fiber and fuel becomes available for a life of dignity, free from drudgery. One example is Ralegan Sidhi - Anna Hazare's successful experiment. There are more like that - Pani Panchayats, Kerala experiments, Auroville experiments and so on. The challenge now is to replicate such examples a thousand times. The challenge is also to integrate such wasteland development and agricultural development not only with provision of livelihoods to millions who live of the land but also with small-scale manufacture and local infrastructure development so that many more livelihoods can be created.

## Community Control over Natural Resources

Such a massive attempt at creation of livelihoods in the primary sector needs a more equitable access to the natural resources on which primary production rests. Land is one asset. Water is another. Forests are a third. The seas and rivers are a fourth. Bio-diversity is another natural resource on which life depends. There was a time when all of this common and used for the good of all. These resources could not be sold or purchased. They were venerated. Slowly land and then water got privatized. Forests were taken away from the people who lived on them and protected them - often in the name of conservation. Or people were taken away from the forests (by dams for example). The seas were plundered by greedy industries without any care for the future. Once biodiversity was recognized as a resource the privatization of this resource in large seed-banks and their disappearance in the wild got accelerated.

The only path to saving these resources is to give their management back to the local communities. It is for local communities to refuse to hand over these resources. For communities to network so that everywhere the rich are denied, or resistance is offered to their having unlimited, access to these natural resources.

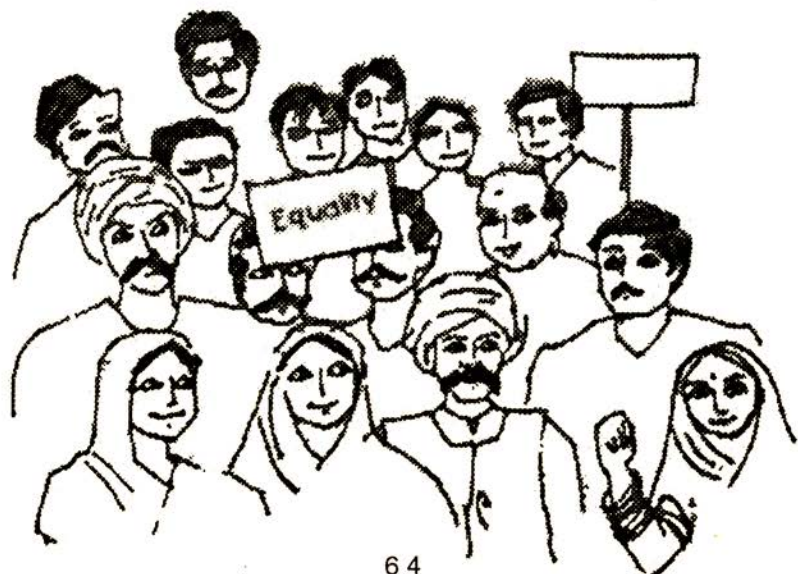


## Ensuring Equitable Access within Communities

This is true in primary production also. We need a massive effort to bring back the productive capacity of the land in a sustainable way. But it must be an equitable way also. It must be a way where marginalization of weaker sections decreases. If for example a water users committee is formed to manage a tank or a watershed, then it becomes essential for us to ensure that the dalits and other landless get not only wages from such work but also a part of the assets created and a share in the decision making process. These are not impossible demands. On the contrary time and again it has been shown that this is the only way of showing results that are sustained. Any other way is neither desirable, nor in the long run, feasible!

## Democratic and Ethical Framework

Whenever attempts are made to generate and improve livelihoods in the unorganized sector one must remember the problems of initiating such attempts within a system that is based on competition and greed. In such a system, livelihoods that are generated can be more drudgery prone, more unfair to women, it can employ child labour to cut costs and be more exploitative of the work force than in the organized sector. Only a conscious effort to avoid this along with more democratic forms of management of these networks can prevent this from happening. Only if such a goal is attempted will such livelihood interventions lead to larger social changes. So there is need for mutual co-operation, change of mindsets and change of concepts.



## What is to be done?

A "Health for All Now" movement should have amongst other things, a component to provide support to the disadvantaged and unorganized poor in defense of their livelihoods.

### Micro-enterprises:

Each state can set up, to begin with a group of competent professionals who will study in-depth the prospects and problems of local micro-enterprises in the era of global mega enterprises. There should be a number of study teams associated with each state core group to inquire into:

1. Physical and human-resource base.
2. Market surveys & choice of products & size of production.
3. Identification of appropriate technologies, bridging the gaps that may be there, ground level operationalization, continuous up-gradation etc.
4. Marketing, creation of new market, capturing of existing markets, non-market-marketing etc.
5. Institutional frameworks needed to promote and preserve micro-enterprise initiatives and collectives.

This could be a beginning with a one year programme started towards the latter part of the year. There could be a number of state, regional, and national level consultations. There could be 15 to 20 state level groups and four, five subcommittees in each group. Towards the middle of the 2001, we can have a tentative plan for the "fight back initiative". What is the guesstimate of money available for such community initiatives from:

- a. Government sources    b. Own savings    c. Institutional financing ?

What could be the size of the market in macro terms created by:

- a. Expanding consumption (by increasing incomes of the poor)
- b. Replacing larger players

The numbers involved are huge, very huge!

### Agriculture:

The scope for intervention in the primary sector is just as large. For intervention in primary production there are a number of models to learn from and replicate in tune with local requirements. What one needs is a massive replication and a coordinated campaign much on the lines of the current campaign for health. After all the impact of structural adjustment on the agricultural sector is as damaging if not even more so than the health sector!

The tasks before us are two-fold:

1. Bringing back Land Reform, Access to Common Property, Basic Human Rights & Right to Information into the political agenda.
2. Creating alternative models of development, networking them and campaigning for a responsible pattern of consumption.

Only a proper combination of these two aspects can lead to a social transformation.





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