

Indian Perspectives on
**Social Sector Issues and
Sustainable Development Goals:**
Policies, Prospects and Future Directions

NATIONAL SEMINAR REPORT

Themes:

- Education and Skill Development
- Health and Nutrition
- Towards Gender Equality
- Poverty, Employment and Inclusive Growth
- Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture
- Social Marginalisation and Inequality



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

NATIONAL SEMINAR ON

**INDIAN PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SECTOR ISSUES AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
POLICIES, PROSPECTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

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National Seminar Report

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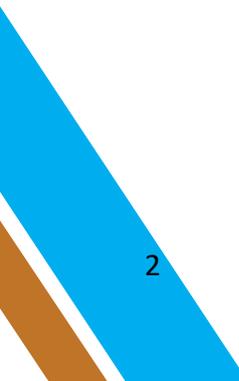


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Overview

The Council for Social Development (CSD) organised a two-day National Seminar on Indian Perspectives on Social Sector Issues and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Policies, Prospects and Future Directions on 15-16 July 2016, at New Delhi. Eminent scholars, experts, policy makers and practitioners were invited from different parts of the country to participate in the seminar, which was partially funded by UNESCO.

The seminar had several sessions, with each session being devoted to a particular theme covered under SDG. The inaugural session was presided over by Muchkund Dubey, President, CSD. R. Govinda, Distinguished Professor, CSD, introduced the theme of the seminar to the participants. Shigeru Aoyagi, Director and UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka, made his remarks on “Perspective on SDGs (Goal 4) in South Asia”, with the inaugural address being delivered by the Chief Guest, Kishore Singh, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.

The theme of the first session was “Education and Skill Development”, and it was chaired by Krishna Kumar from Delhi University. The three speakers at the session included: Preet Rustagi, Professor, Institute for Human Development (IHD), along with her colleague Swati Dutta, whose paper is related to school education and SDGs; N.V. Varghese, Director of Centre for Policy Research (CPR) in Higher Education at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA); and Santosh Mehrotra from the Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies.

The theme of the second session was “Health and Nutrition”, and it was chaired by Srinath Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). The speakers for this session included Imrana Qadeer from CSD; Gita Sen from the Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health, PHFI; and T. Sundararaman, from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).

The third session with the theme “Towards Gender Equality” was chaired by Mary E. John, from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). The speakers at this session included Suneeta Dhar from Jagori, and Lakshmi Lingam from TISS.

The fourth session with the theme “Poverty, Employment and Inclusive Growth”, was chaired by R.S. Deshpande from Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC). The speakers at this session included Ravikiran Naik, from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA); Mona Khare from NUEPA; and Praveen Jha from JNU. Since Praveen Jha could not make his presence for the Seminar, Ashok Pankaj from CSD, as a discussant, gave his insights over Jha’s paper.

The fifth session on “Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture” was chaired by Utsa Patnaik from JNU, and the speakers at this session included Mondira Bhattacharya from CSD; R.S. Deshpande from ISEC; and Madhura Swaminathan, from the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI).

The sixth session on “Social Marginalisation and Inequality” was chaired by K.B. Saxena from CSD, while the speakers at the session included Manoranjan Mohanty, and Zoya Hasan from CSD; and Badri Narayan from JNU.



The concluding session, which was chaired by Muchkund Dubey, President, CSD, comprised a panel discussion on 'International Commitment and India's Performance in Social Development'. The speakers at this session included Mitu Sengupta from Ryerson University, Toronto; Soumya Swaminathan, from Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR); and JBG Tilak, NUEPA. The closing remarks were delivered by R. Govinda from CSD.

Introductory Remarks

R. Govinda, Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, welcomed the gathering for the seminar and introduced every member present at the dais. He highlighted CSD's main mandate, which is to engage in empirical and reflective analysis on the status of social development in India. In pursuance of this, CSD has been organising a range of activities such as conduction of research and its dissemination by bringing out publications like the *Social Development Report* and a periodical known as *Social Change* in addition to a large number of other publications.

Professor Govinda alluded to the issues that prompted CSD to organise a seminar on the chosen topic. The contemporary political discourse contains recurring references to increasing inequality in society. Besides, the critical issues of health, livelihood and education have also not been adequately addressed in the country and hence the need to re-examine the projects and policies related to development. The mandate to do away with inequality of all kinds and ensure the well-being of the people is already enshrined in our Constitution, which directs the State to minimise inequalities in income, eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, secure for its citizens an adequate means of livelihood, and ensure that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production in the hands of a few. However, even after six and a half decades of Independence and the drafting of its Constitution, as also the implementation of economic reforms and significant economic progress achieved by the country, the situation is quite disturbing in many ways, particularly with respect to most of the country's economic development indicators.



Professor Govinda observed that in the background of persisting poverty, the international community adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the beginning of the century under the auspices of the UN, and its member-nations pledged to reduce the proportion of people living under poverty and deprivation, to get access to clean water and sanitation, to reduce infant mortality, and to reverse the spread of HIV AIDS. During the special session of the UN held in 2002, it was emphasised that investing in children, health and education is one of the most effective ways of eradicating poverty.

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India has signed almost every covenant drafted by the UN. However, the ground realities have been slow to change in practical terms as is obvious from the increase in inequality across all the countries, including both developed as well as developing nations, which threatens to derail the achievements under the MDGs. This is amply clear by the stock-taking done in 2015 when the original MDG period ended and the new one began. In this context, the international community has developed a new agenda for pursuing global development under the banner of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDG framework adopted by the UN for the post-2015 development agenda consists of 17 goals and 169 strategies for implementation. The SDGs are highly relevant for a country like India as they provide a broad canvas to pursue its development agenda in continuance with the agenda at the global level. The newly constituted NITI Aayog also accords prominence to the SDG agenda in its planning. India also needs to develop its strategies in a more coherent and contextual fashion by following international benchmarks and retracing its efforts wherever needed.

The reality in India is, however, not very encouraging as far as the goal of global development is concerned. Paradoxically, India is amongst the fastest growing economies in the world and yet it also accounts for the largest number of illiterates and poor people in the world. The level of malnutrition in the country is so steep that it can be compared to that in sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) too, India ranks among the lowest in the world. The scenario is particularly intriguing because news reports, on the one hand, highlight more and more Indians joining the global club of HNIs while on the other hand, they showcase on the same page, other reports that report extreme destitution and financial distress, which often push people to take their own lives. Rampant



social and economic inequality makes one wonder what is happening to the wealth being created. Can this wealth creation be sustained if it fails to ensure the well-being of a large majority of the people of this country? These questions make it imperative for India to re-evaluate its policies and strategies, and one of the objectives of this seminar is to propagate this idea and assess the appropriateness.

On the positive side, the intensity of national dialogue and discussion on critical issues has risen to an unprecedented level during the last decade. This is amply evident from the

vast range of campaigns witnessed on social sector needs during the last few years including the right to education, land rights, food security, health for all, gender equality, women's empowerment, livelihoods, and employment guarantee. Successive governments have also tried to promote the idea of sustainable and equitable economic growth but the reality entails the prevalence of high levels of both economic and social disparities.

Highlighting the context of the seminar, Professor Govinda pointed out that in a country as diverse as India, equitable development can be brought about only through the implementation of broad-based inclusive social policies backed by an adequate reservoir of financial resources. The character and contour of such an approach for development thus need to be discussed and it is hoped that this seminar will help us arrive at a consensus on social development. The various themes of this seminar have also been selected by keeping the Indian context in mind.

Shigeru Aoyagi, Director and UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka, averred that UNESCO is very happy to be a part of this relevant seminar, especially for promoting an environment conducive to the achievement of the SDGs, and their 17 goals and 169 indicators by 2030. All the countries have the flexibility to chart out the indicators of SDGs for attaining economic empowerment and social development. SDG-4 pertains to education, which is an extremely important goal that is also essential to the success of the SDGs themselves. Professor Aoyagi stated that for fulfilling SDG-4, UNESCO, along with the UNICEF regional office for South Asia and other sister UN organisations and

member states of SAARC, developed a 'Framework for Education in 2030', which he considered a very important document for all the partners.

He highlighted the important points of this framework, which include dealing with the problem of illiteracy and out-of-school children. Although there has been lot of improvement in South Asia in terms of school education and enrolment, there have also been lots of discrepancies. Referring to the EFA study,

he stated that India has achieved more than 90 percent of enrolment. He further expressed concern with regard to the 256 million out-of-school children and noted that this is not just a problem of being out of school, but also a social problem, which compromises the principle of equity and equality. The other aspects highlighted by Mr. Shigeru include the rapidly changing knowledge base of society, and lack of access to basic reading materials.

He also noted that within the SDG-4, the most difficult part is SDG-4.7, which refers to education for sustainable development, education for peace, and education for global citizenship. He argued that we are living in a highly fragile world where education should address and inculcate a sense of global citizenship. In addition, we are living in different circumstances but we must learn to respect diversity and respect the differences. India is one of the best countries where education for sustainable development and global citizenship could be addressed in many senses.

He emphasised the four pillars of learning for the twenty-first

century: Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together, and (Learning to be.) With the coming of the industrial age, the entire focus of education has shifted from cultural objectives to that of economic objectives.(The teachers' goals have also shifted from being an instructor to being a facilitator. The proposed new education policy could also address the unfinished agenda of 256 million illiterates and 18 million kids who do not go to schools. He also noted that the new education policy could include measures to catch up with the speed of transformation of ICT and also formulate development manuals and strategies for teachers. Mr. Aoyagi ended his address with the hope that India can take a lead in dealing with this challenge.

Kishore Singh, the UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Education, asserted that this initiative of sustainable development is very pertinent today because the UN and other agencies are also concerned about



the same. Everywhere, there is a high degree of concern for education and sustainable development goals, which recognize the value of dignity and human rights for all. The agenda should be to envisage a scenario wherein every person is guaranteed access to universal rights and basic economic opportunities. There is an enormous disparity in wealth, power and opportunity across the world. He noted the reasons for such disparity and argued that adequate attention is not being paid to the social development agenda and that the agenda of social transformation is ignored as compared to the agenda of economic transformation. Bringing the agenda of social transformation within the popular discourse is very important.

He affirmed that education is integral to any development process and the UN development agenda also posits that education is fundamental in realising the SDGs. All the goals of the sustainable development agenda have, in one way or the other, included education, which involves growth, dignity and employment, and is the building block of every society and the most important pathway out of poverty.

In reality, the developments that we are witnessing today are the outcome of uncontrolled privatisation because of which inequality has also increased alarmingly. The privatisation of education, specifically higher education, is aggravating the situation even further. He stated that he had raised these fundamental issues in two of his consecutive reports submitted to the UN, which have also been appreciated by many states and their governments but these findings need to be acknowledged and turned into policy for bringing about any effective change. In the case of education, controlling privatisation is extremely important. When we talk of the role of government in implementing and realising the SDGs, we must realise that the role of government is integral and there must be an accountability mechanism from the government towards the fulfilment of these goals.

Social Justice and Equity are the two key pillars of UN Vision of Development adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. It is important to respect international law and the legal and political obligations of the states. One of the major questions that arises in this context is as to who would finance the SDGs. It has been reiterated through various discussions in UN that it is the responsibility of the State to fund the SDGs. The UN has itself also set up a commission for financing the SDGs.

Muchkund Dubey, President, Council for Social Development, stated that one way of assessing the social situation in India is to examine the progress made since independence in statistical and numerical terms, such as the number of children we have been able to send to school, the number of schools we have built, and the number of hospital beds we have created, among other parameters.

Professor Dubey rued the fact that India is today placed at the lowest ladder with regard to a number



of important indicators in the world. India probably has the largest number of illiterates and malnourished children and also perhaps the poorest quality of education in the world. It also has a highly inequitable and discriminatory system, which discriminates against the poorest and the most marginalised in the community, who do not even have purchasing power. They suffer from both demand and supply constraints.

Professor Dubey remarked that in

India, we have built a system of a welfare state since Independence, and more particularly in the last twenty years with efforts from civil society organisations and NGOs, which has elements of social justice and equality, and which has sought to provide social services to the poor and the marginalised in different sectors.

He also appreciated the enactment of the right to life in our constitution by the courts, and subsequently, the Right to Education Act, Food Security Act and many other legal provisions for welfare made in the health, sanitation and other sectors. These policies should have ideally ensured sustainable development in all these sectors, and provided us the basic elements of an autonomous growth. However, unfortunately, this has not happened. When these acts were passed and the constitutional edifice was made piece by piece, it was mainly done because of the pressure of public opinion. It was an addition on to the overall macroeconomic policy and did not fit into the scheme of the government's macroeconomic policy.

The resources required for ensuring the success of these schemes have been drastically cut, as for example, in one of the important sectors of education. In the last budget, the allocation on education has been reduced by 24 per cent, on the mid-day meal scheme by 22 per cent, and on integrated child development by about 50 per cent.

In their speeches, various members of the government say that the social sectors would be taken care of once we attain growth as if the development of social sectors is contingent upon growth. Generally, attracting foreign investment is itself contingent upon the development of social sectors. Foreign investment would not come if they find that there is strife and struggle in society.

In the contemporary economic situation, the existence of educated labour is a pre-requisite for investment and investment would not simply come if investors know that labour is not skilled and educated. We do not realise that development of the social sector is a precondition for investment.

The implementation of a necessary provision such as the RTE is also being utterly neglected. We have not heard about anything on RTE from the current government. It is said that such provisions will be replaced by policies such as the health and education policy. However, these are distractions and will not work through mere policies without any serious intention of implementation.

The increasing trend of linking social development to the GDP is illogical and an economic absurdity, and is also not being fair with the people.

A fundamental right cannot be made conditional and most of the services in the social sector have already become or are on the verge of becoming fundamental rights. We thus need to build a system that is equitable and fair. Finally, we have to continue our movement for achieving these goals and CSD is a forum that would continue to take this movement forward through its ideas and through the adoption of a systemic approach backed by research and data.

Education and Skill Development

Chair:

Krishna Kumar

Speakers:

Preet Rustagi, Swati Dutta and Deeksha Tayal
Santosh Mehrotra and Vinay Swarup Mehrotra
N.V. Varghese

SDGs for School Education in India: Issues and Challenges

Preet Rustagi, Swati Dutta and Deeksha Tayal, *Institute of Human Development*

Professor Rustagi began the presentation by saying that education is an overarching goal, which impinges on the development agenda. From this vantage point and also from the point of view of child rights and the recognition of childhood, education is important for its human resource and economic gains. However, education has been increasingly used in different ways and attention is paid to it by different sectors primarily because of the perspective of economic gains.



This becomes a restricted approach at least for people who look at it from the perspective of child rights and childhood per se. The focus on school education, that is, 12 years of schooling and elementary education has led to the advent of certain key initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Right to Education (RTE) and the consequent development of infrastructure and school facilities. But a lot more still needs to be done. Explaining SDGs she said it is being ambitious and universal regarding EFA which UNESCO also defines it. The goals of the SDGs for education are equity, inclusion and quality, which need clearer defining, vision, and measures for facilitating their translation into action. The concomitant challenges have been non-completion, non-universal and non-retention of the children in school. This, calls for clarity on how to better reach the difficult-to-reach children including the children of sex workers, migrant children, children in conflict regions, homeless children, HIV-affected children, and those categorised under the mobile population. Although the investment on infrastructure has increased, much more needs to be done to achieve equality and universality.

The pre-school section has been left out of the RTE Act, despite a long drawn struggle for it, but for the first time, the significance of systematic pre-schooling for one year before the child enters formal school has been indicated. She revealed that 69 per cent of the schooling in the elementary phase is ostensibly free and entails no fee. However, in reality, the NSS statistics have underestimated the free element and it is not yet totally free. This is because of the entry of private players into the education sector in urban centres, which has led to a steep rise in the cost of education. From the public good perspective, the wide popular perception is that public schooling is not delivering the requisite results especially if seen with regard to the resultant costs. Another concern has been the rise in the rate of

dropouts and the incidence of 'out-of-school' children, despite the gains in terms of infrastructure and school facilities. Gender parity has been witnessed at the elementary level and even to an extent, at the higher education level.

As regards social categories, gender equity is still lacking among the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). An analysis of the literacy rates shows that 28 per cent of the people are illiterate even today. Among the 15-24 year age group, the proportion of out-of-school children constituted 50 per cent of the total about 5-6 years back, but the figure is now 30 per cent. In 15 years from now, these children would be retained for attaining the goal in its complete form. The questions of quality and joyful learning, social inclusion, and drop-outs of SCs and STs, however, still remain. Meanwhile, the gender gap has also come down to 16 points and declining further. The dropout rate at the elementary level has been seen to be high among the SCs, STs, and OBCs. It is mostly boys among the STs who are dropping out because of economic constraints. Amendment of the child labour law and recognition of family work is pushing more ST boys to enter into work and drop out from school early. Focusing on targets 1 (free equitable and quality education) and 2 (quality, early childhood and pre-school) of SDG 4, Professor Rustagi mentioned the concept of lifelong learning opportunity, though there is no clarity on ways of achieving it. Although the reduction in distance has led to greater access to school, social and economic access, especially for ST and SC children, remains low. Among the out-of-school children, 44 per cent were never enrolled despite efforts made to enrol all children under the RTE. There is need to rebuild the public education system, in view of the fact that 70 per cent of the children in rural areas and 30 per cent in the urban areas are enrolled free in elementary schools.

The incidence of private tuitions is higher in private education despite the popular belief that private tuitions exist in public schools because of the poor quality of education. Private tuitions have led to further escalations in the cost of education. It is also difficult to impart technology through computer education in places like Bihar which face consistent problems of lack of electricity. The other grey areas in the education sector are differential access and ambiguous level of preparedness. As per the Rapid Survey on Children (RSOC), 75 per cent of the children have access to *anganwadis* while 25 per cent do not have access and are thus unable to attend them. This is largely true of the SC and ST children in rural areas. Dr Rustagi summarised her presentation by adding that for assessing the learner achievement for the quality of education, the only available data is that of ASER, which has limitations. The implementation of SDGs thus requires careful formulation, generation of statistics with granularity, and disaggregation for quality education.

Challenges beyond Schooling: Innovative Model for Development of Youth Skills in India

Santosh Mehrotra, *JNU* and Vinay Swarup Mehrotra, *NCERT*

Professor Santosh Mehrotra focused on three aspects in his presentation—the concept of skills in India, the four pillars of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system, its problems, and the failure of the Government to create an appropriate financing model for TVET. Explaining the concept of skills he spoke about cognitive skills, non-cognitive skills or transversal skills, which cut across disciplines like communication skills, language skills, IT skills, team work, soft skills and vocational skills as alluded to under the TVET system. The first pillar of the TVET system is the secondary school system. Till about two years ago, there was a Central Government scheme started in 1986 which ran vocational education at the senior secondary levels (that is, in classes 11 and 12). However,

even after 40 years of implementation of this system, only 3 per cent of the children in the relevant age group were trained in vocational skills in contrast to China, where half of all children at the senior secondary level have been trained in vocational skills. Citing the reasons for this situation, Professor Mehrotra said that the concept of skill education in the country is poor and not aspirational. Five years ago, a significant change occurred in the system in the form of the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF).



The main objective of the SDG on education is thus to perpetuate a policy for implementation across the country to address the multiple problems with regard to the education system. It focused on vertical and horizontal mobility in the training system and aimed to create a system of 10 levels from class 9 to the post-graduate level equivalent to general academic. Consequently, in 2011, the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) was framed, and two years later, the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) was notified by the Government. As a result of the conflict between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) over the NVQF and NSQF, the NSQF remained as the HRD ministry had framed it. It was implemented from 2014 onwards and succeeded in bringing all players on the same platform but there is no consistency in the system across the country. The constituents of Pillar 2 of the TVET, viz. the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), were under the Ministry of Labour from the 1950s to the 1960s. Until 2007, there were 1896 government run ITIs, but their number expanded gradually.

However, the private sector expanded rapidly, going up from 2000 in 2007 to 10,000 in 2014, signifying a fivefold increase and consequently creating problems of an unregulated private system. Pillar 3 of TVET was the financing of vocational training institutes, which emerged in 2010. Following the pressures of a baseless target-driven regime, the NSDC funded private vocational training centres. The number-driven targets were far more than the real estimate, which the author has discussed explicitly in his book, *India's Skill Challenges*. In his book, he argues that the actual number of such institutes was 200 million, which was cited as 500 million that are training 50 million students per year. This prompted NSDC to generate private vocational training providers (VTPs), who themselves had varying mixed levels of training with no quality and competency after going through an unrealistically short duration of training courses ranging from 10 days to 3–4 months. The fourth pillar he mentioned was that of in-house enterprise-based training, and World Bank surveys showed that in this category, India is at the bottom of the league, with the training share being as low as 16 per cent in 2009, which went up to 39 per cent in 2014.

Professor Mehrotra concluded that there is no evidence of NVQFs succeeding in their objectives even after they came up with national occupational standards instead of syllabi and curriculum for training in different trades. The system is also plagued by a shortage of teachers, and very low level of competence and industry experience. The demographic dividend is expected to last for about 25 years, and

every year lost in this regard poses a problem. The lack of an industrial and TVET policy aggravates the problem further. In this backdrop, it is important to recognise that government-driven TVET systems are supply-driven with the NSDC being fully funded by the Government. Enterprise-based training constitutes a tiny fraction of the 5 million persons currently being trained. There is need for an alternate financing model which would ensure that TVET becomes industry-driven and industry-owned. Sector skill councils are industry bodies and should be industry-driven. Alignment of industry and TVET is also important. The Twelfth Plan and the National Skill Policy of 2015 have already laid the foundation for this. Finally, the Government should fund education and public health.

Knowledge Skills and Sustainable Development: Role of Higher Education in a Stage of Massification

N.V. Varghese, *CPRHE, NUEPA*



Professor Varghese began his presentation by recalling Dr R. Govinda's emphasis on the critical issue of inequality and education. He based his arguments on six parameters, viz. labour force participation, employment and educational levels, unemployment by educational and social groups, wage levels, and sustainable development. He argued that inequalities in the contemporary world are increasing unlike traditional societies wherein inheritance of land and property defines professions. The type of jobs and type of educational institutions determine quality

control measures, which vary significantly.

One of the significant fallouts of globalisation is that "we are growing, [but] we are growing unequally". This phenomenon changed slightly after 2007-08 to "we are not growing and inequalities are increasing". This marked difference came about as a result of the state versus market development process. Even in the social and economic sectors, growth was not significant but there were marked inequalities. Referring to Simon's Theory, he said that economists tolerated inequalities in the 1950s and 1960s but post the 1970s, the Lawrence curve shows how inequalities are increasing in both the developed and developing countries. Increasing inequality is leading to a change in the pattern of employment. Another effect of globalisation is that skilled labourers are migrating to the developed countries and unskilled labour to developing countries. Within the country, high cleavage is seen in the job scenario. There are less high-end jobs and more low-end jobs. This constitutes one form of inequality. There is also an increase in wages in high-end jobs with the number of billionaires from developing countries increasing significantly. The second question he posed was as to who is getting these jobs, which brings in the role of education. He pointed to the decline in labour force participation in India, with the male participation rate decreasing from 55 to 50 per cent and the corresponding female rate decreasing from 29 to 23 per cent in the last decade. Overall, labour force participation fell from 43 to 39 per cent. The other issue is that of the type of employment. The larger share of jobs is the low-paying jobs. Simultaneously, jobs in the formal sector are decreasing while those in the informal sector are increas-

ing.

The quality of employment is also substantially different. With widening income variations, 50 per cent of those employed are illiterate (women). However, the levels of education have increased among both men and women. The same trend is seen in the job categories. Referring to the inverted U-shaped curve used in Indian and ILO studies, the peak of the 'U' is no longer secondary education but university education, which is why it goes up but does not come down. This going up of the curve is also not combined with high wage levels.

The policies in the 1960s and 1970s emphasised the expansion of higher education along with employment opportunities. However, later it was expanded on the assumption that with the spread of higher education, it would be possible to find employment for all those acquiring this education. Over the years, 63-64 per cent of higher education institutions have been privatised. These institutions are investing on education for their business interests whereas the Public sector is not producing employment. The quality of employment has also changed, leading to widening inequalities on the job front. Although traditionally, no efforts were made to link education with employment, the situation has reversed today, with the focus shifting to competencies and learning outcomes in skills. The national higher education qualification framework defined education in terms of qualifications, not skills. Skill-oriented education suits the business communities and non-university institutions should be responsible for this. University education should instead be based on training and knowledge production.

The Chair during the session highlighted the several valuable glimpses of knowledge and research on institutional frameworks and general policy covering primary to higher education including vocational education and training.



Discussion

Kurien drew attention to Preet Rustagi's paper and its focus on the lack of disaggregated data and how statistics need to be collected on the basis of religion and caste groups. The educational levels of Muslim children are much lower among the SC and ST children. International commitments refer to universalisation till the secondary level. However, the Subramanian Committee has left out secondary education though it mentions pre-school education. The poor suffer the most due to such policies. These aspects need to be studied at the state levels.

Muchkund Dubey remarked on Santosh Mehrotra's comment on vocational education being successful in China and not in India because of the quality of primary and secondary education. He asked how private financing of vocational education contributes in this regard. The other questions posed concerned the relationship between SDGs and NEP.

Response: Responding to the questions, Preet Rustagi said that this study would allow them to obtain statistics on Muslim children, which are indeed lower than those of SC and ST children. The social



exclusion aspects brought out in state-based disaggregated data are also important. However, this kind of thinking is not going into the formulation of NEP, which is regressing in its recommendations from the perspective of children.

Santosh Mehrotra reiterated role of government in education and healthcare. He also proposed a financial model in his research, which would be able to address some of the inherent problems of the TVET system. This would ensure ways of building both cognitive and non-cognitive skills through bridge courses. His research has also highlighted the industry-owned TVET system, which has worked in several countries.

N.V. Varghese clarified that 50 per cent of the employed women are illiterate, and this is applicable not only to the informal sector but to all women employed. He added that we must allow for diversity in the ways of imparting this skill formation rather than diluting university rigour. There is a need to make a distinction between university, job market and the non-university sector. Disaggregated data has shown how the disadvantaged social groups and the lower ranked institutions they attended do not offer an immediate benefit. Such developments are also taking place in other countries to strengthen higher education systems for the benefit of socially disadvantaged groups.

The Chair's concluding remarks outlined the importance of considering the new ideas and thinking points emerging from the discussion during this session. When the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was formed, everyone was hopeful of its outcome as in the case of the SSA and RMSA, but these hopes were belied. Skill development lacked pedagogic components and academic advancement without skill development does not pay. One topic which he felt was not touched in the discussion was the choice of technology as a major variable in the discussion on education in employment. Even Japan, which is seen as a benchmark for achieving development, chose labour-intensive technology in the short period. Thus, choices that are significant for pedagogy and the teacher's role in education need to be made.

Health and Nutrition

Chair: Srinath Reddy

Speakers: Imrana Qadeer
Gita Sen
T.Sundararaman

Remarks by the Chair

By including several objectives related to public health in the SDGs, different nation states and the international organisations are committed to better health outcomes. The MDGs had their own limitations, which has led to the political context of initiating SDGs.

Professor Reddy explained the limitations of MDGs, which had fragmented the health system vertically and donor-driven programmes were segmented by age, with children, and women being left out. The MDGs had also left out non-communicable diseases. There was a focus on mortality with no priority being given to morbidity.

Another focus of the MDGs was on lower middle income countries and less focus was accorded to middle income countries. In India, there are large scale inequities among social classes. The MDGs were skewed but the SDGs have improved, bridging all areas of health along with UHC serving as a platform for meeting a variety of health needs of the people. Therefore, the SDGs signify both an opportunity and concern for the discourse on public health not only at the global level but also at the national level. In India, the *Niti Aayog* views healthcare as a serious policy concern. The SDG3 has become a theoretical as well as a practical policy in the political economy of health.



Public Health Policies: Generating Revenues or Relief?

Imrana Qadeer, *Council for Social Development*

Professor Qadeer pointed out that there have been decades of policy making in India as also policy interventions in the health sector but what have we learned from this process of health policy making in India? Similar processes of economic and political policy making in many other countries have led to better public health outcomes.

This presentation reviewed four aspects of the Indian experience: (a) The contemporary history of health sector reforms in India and



attempts by the State to retain some aspects of welfare; (b) The current acceleration of reforms and trends as reflected by the new establishment's annual plans and by the National Institute for transformation of India (NITI) Aayog; (c) The perspectives of the medical industry vis-à-vis the health sector; and (d) The projected allocation of resources as presented by the State and its problems. These aspects are analysed against the officially projected achievements in terms of health indicators and some alternative data analysis to critique the key thrust of the present policy and its professed and real implications in terms of both investment patterns and achievements.

Different Five Year Plans and committees on health in the past have been rooted in the conditions of people and their lives. Many of these offered free basic health care for all, exemplified in the concept of Universal Health Care. Later, with experimentation, planning and the process of trial and error, planning became fragmented and lacked intersectional integration.

The Alma Ata declaration incorporated the principle of Comprehensive Primary Health Care, its integration within the developmental process, and the tenet that health policy should be based on people's needs and the epidemiological findings of the society. It was further reduced to the concepts of "Essential Primary Health Care" and "Selective Primary Health Care", in accordance with political shifts in various countries. In the neo-liberal political context, policy makers are interpreting and defining "universality" to cut down catastrophic healthcare needs, and hence the focus is on medical care, privatisation of care, and financing for insurance schemes.

As per the National Health Accounts data on healthcare funding, 71.13 per cent of it is out-of-pocket expenditure and less than 15 per cent of it is the government's share. An analysis of the unit level data of different nutrition rounds on child anaemia and child stunting by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) shows how caste became an important influencing factor, and hence the need for policies to address these multiple intersectionalities.

In India, the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Five Year Plans sabotaged equity by opening up the healthcare market to the private sector and led to the commodification of healthcare delivery. The Tenth Plan was, in fact, totally fragmented and unclear about the tasks on public health in India and unrealistically relied on the growth in the medical industry. The priorities accorded to the achievement of a cumulative growth rate, along with poor regulatory systems and the pro-medical industry policies, worsened the crisis in the Indian public health scenario. Hence, the plan for the benefit of the poor is different from the plan for profit-making. Then the question to be addressed is: Should we wait for SDGs and MDGs, to implement or should we teach, think and plan for the people of India?

The "Health SDG" in India: Advances and Concerns

Gita Sen, Ramalingaswami, Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health, PHFI

Professor Gita Sen focused on the connection with the SDGs and the concomitant challenges in India today.

She addressed the following questions in her presentation:

What does the SDG on health offer for India? How are the SDGs different from the MDGs?

- The shift from the 3 MDGs on Health (that is, numbers # 4, 5, 6 on child mortality, maternal health, and HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases, respectively) to the single SDG 3
- MDGs – 'taming' the scope, interconnectedness with the development agenda, and strong



human rights-linked outcomes of the conferences of the 1990s. The MDGs were written by a group of mostly UN bureaucrats in the UN basement drawing from the OECD; MDG 8 on a partnership for development was never taken seriously.

- *SDG 3 – This ensures healthy lives and promotes well-being for all at all ages.*
- Came from the Rio +20 concern for sustainability having 3 pillars—social, economic, and environmental—17 goals and 169 targets. The indicators include an inclusive process of over three years—interlinked with the Cairo and Beijing review processes; the presence of Major Groups; strong country, regional and thematic consultations; and the North–South divide.
- There has not been much official discussion about the MDGs per se, though civil society has produced shadow reports, which points to a general apparent indifference on the issue.
- *Personal view* – The focus on maternal mortality in the Health Ministry was not unrelated to MDGs though it obviously had other more local causal factors.

India's position in the SDGs processes:

India is part of the G77 on economic issues with the caveat about fractures within the G77 itself. Environmental issues signify the rupture within the G77 between those who are more focused on the CBDR versus the AOSIS. Social development issues signify a steady movement towards the more conservative end of G77, particularly on human rights and gender equality.

The implementation targets of the SDG 3 are as follows:

(3.a) WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (*as appropriate*); (3.b) R&D for vaccines and meds; provide access to affordable, essential meds in accordance with Doha Declaration on TRIPS – flexibility to protect public health; (3.c) Health financing and workforce retention; and (3.d) Early warn-

ing systems.

The key questions of SDG implementation in India are:

Will the Health SDG provide a sufficient umbrella to address the major challenges of:

- Financing
- Growing reliance on the private sector and PPPs without adequate transparency or regulation (implying the existence of deep neo-liberalism)
- Inequality/intersectionality
- Poor quality/accountability of both health and family welfare;
- Ambiguity as to whether India would use the strong target on Doha/TRIPS to advance the drugs and meds aspect of UHC; and
- Will India use the lessons from the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) to strengthen achievements in maternal and child health, and include adolescents (10 – 19 years)?

SDG 3: Taking it seriously

T. Sundararaman, *School of Health Systems Studies, TISS*



The SDGs including the SDG -3 targets lend themselves to interpretation as a political statement that defines development as more than economic growth rates, and health as more than universal health coverage. However, it is possible for technical support agencies allied with global health institutions to amplify certain targets and attenuate or re-interpret others—a process that is well under way with respect to the health targets. Technical considerations both of feasibility of measurement as well as achievement are often used to rationalise such re-interpretations. Clearly, the achievement of SDG targets as stated currently is incompatible with a neo-liberal understand-

ing of growth and development that informs the current national and international economic policies, which could either justify progressive academic and civil society sections distancing themselves from the entire project or be seen as an opportunity. Engaging with the discussion around its measurement, interpretation and implementation could provide scope for questioning current economic policies and neo-liberal understandings of health reform and posing alternatives to these.

The Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Expert Committee in India emphasises the provisioning of health services at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels and that they should be integrated to ensure equitable and efficient procurement and allocations. The Committee believes that it is possible to substantially reform the manner in which Ministries and Departments operate so that they can become effective purchasers of healthcare services. To strengthen public health service delivery system,

most contemporary efforts draw their inspiration from neo-liberal market-based understandings. During the period 1990 to 2004, there was one framework of health sector reform, “Health Sector Reforms under SAP”. From 2008 to 2010, there was another framework, but there is little evidence to show that these measures, including provider–purchaser splits, performance-based incentives, publicly financed insurance models, outsourcing of human resources, and digitisation of monitoring, are doing any better. There is need to insist on minimum levels of investment linked to each of the targets.

There is also a need to create a public understanding on a roadmap for moving towards each of these targets and what this roadmap would look like. It is also essential to consider the barriers and the ways forward, and for creating a framework of analysis and action to address the problematiques of strengthening public services.

Towards Gender Equality

Chair:

Mary E. John

Speakers:

Suneeta Dhar
Lakshmi Lingam

Remarks by the Chair

The chair, Mary E. John, began with a brief note on how the trend of envisioning gender as a separate category within the development discourse often underplays the ethos of gender that is intrinsically embedded in the interplay of gender and development's facets such as health, education and labour. Although issues pertaining to gender call for specific attention, there is need for addressing the manifestation of gender within numerous streams of development. Professor John revisited the colonial roots of the strategy of envisioning gender as a development indicator by referring to the twentieth-century British historian James Mills, who stated that the status of women in [colonial] India would be the mark of the status of British conquest and its civilisation mission. She appreciated the reference to gender during various sessions of the seminar and noted that though gender may not have been discussed substantially in those sessions, there was an effort to envision and underscore gender in developmental issues like health and education.



Towards Gender Equality

Suneeta Dhar, *Jagori*

Sunita Dhar, the first speaker of the session, pointed out at the very beginning of her presentation that she is an activist and her perspective is primarily determined by her engagement in the women's movement at the local, national and international levels. She added that she is not related to any group of the SDGs but has been part of the Beijing Conference, which signified a momentum that had brought about a paradigm shift in the approach of the State as well as the women's movement towards women and gender justice. This conference was thus a remarkable learning about how the dominant world view marginalises a majority of the world population and women certainly constitute a category that experiences marginalisation across the globe. The conference underscored whose voice matters and how no country in the world has reached to equality in terms of gender. The



governments also acknowledge this fact and it is certainly easy to acknowledge it while lacking a clear perspective and agenda to address the issues of marginalisation and vulnerability through the women's lifecycle. Dhar insisted that the State's approach of envisioning women through their lifecycle indicates how women are not seen as independent autonomous citizens but as mothers, daughters, and daughters-in-law, among other roles. The Beijing Conference was a forum where women across the globe shared their experiences of discrimination and their struggle to condemn oppression and work for a society without oppression.

Dhar recognised the SDG as a continuation of the journey she had started in Beijing 22 years ago that allowed her to understand how discrimination materialises and through whose eyes the world is seen. She discussed how some of the agreements arrived at in Beijing were not very different from the SDG. While discussing the State's concern over being accountable towards the marginalised, Dhar pointed out that the state is now talking about accountability rather than impunity. She recognised this approach as an evident reflection of the state's changing attitude towards women's marginalisation and added how, despite the existence of policies and laws and numerous initiatives, we are not moving towards equality. However, Dhar noted, the governments of many countries registered the need for specific policies to address women's issues after Beijing. The agenda of the Beijing Conference was welfare-oriented and some countries like Vietnam and Laos actually picked up from the Beijing agenda and included important issues for engendering their policies. Such enthusiasm was, however, not observed in India.

Dhar considered the MGDs to be a North-driven agenda but she recognised that the SDGs, like the Beijing agenda, signified a more sensitive approach towards addressing the issues faced by the marginalised people. When the SDGs were adopted in September 2015 by the UN, one concern was as to how they would address inequalities. While Dhar appreciated the government's concern about inequalities, she believed that the absence of a clear agenda for addressing inequalities would obstruct the operationalisation of initiatives aimed at eliminating inequality.

Dhar considered women's international networks as crucial forums to learn about major initiatives taken to address gender inequality across the world. It is evident that governments are not looking at the feminised nature of poverty, unpaid care work, gender budgeting and many other issues that manifest gender inequalities. She argued that corporate captured development is influencing researches on gender issues as well. Dhar referred to some recent publications that establish a correlation between increasing per capita income and education as important triggers for women's withdrawal from the labour force. But, she reinforced, it is a well-established fact that women are not counted and are also pushed out of the recognisable labour force. Furthermore, though governments discuss about women and gender equality, the issues of sexual minorities are rarely discussed. The governments of various countries had also assured that they would sign the CEDAW. But many countries, including India, have not signed it yet. Dhar also referred to studies of institutions like Jagori that underscores the proportion of budget spends on water, sanitation, policing and transportation, among other heads, for promoting gender justice. She shared information about the discussion of installation of CCTV cameras under the Nirbhaya Fund for which a sum of Rs. 300 crore was allotted, and the two major proposals recognised for this Fund's utilisation. But there was no vision or clear agenda to address this issue. Evidently, there is money to procure CCTVs for monitoring but not for eliminating the discriminatory and oppressive practices that make women vulnerable. She discussed about NITI Aayog's matrix that explains which department would be responsible for which goals. In this matrix, women's safety is confined to surveillance, policing and security. There is no initiative to see how women could be treated equally and how they could access basic facilities, Dhar concluded.

Towards Gender Equality and Poverty: Tracking Policies and Programme

Lakshmi Lingam, *Tata Institute of Social Sciences*

The second presentation of the session was made by Professor Lakshmi Lingam. Her paper, titled, “Towards Gender Equality and Poverty Eradication” primarily focused on contextualising the goals laid down under the SDGs on gender equality and poverty reduction, and underscore the key concerns emerging in its operationalisation.

Professor Lingam highlighted what she referred to as the “enormous differences between the MDGs and SDGs”. This difference is evident in the scale of this new global mission for expanding the outreach for development with 17 goals and 169 targets as against 8 goals and 19 targets of the MDGs. Moreover, the goals laid down under the SDGs emphasise the multidimensional character of poverty that cannot be addressed without integrating environmental concerns in poverty reduction initiatives, and in the absence of good governance and various governments’ partnership to achieve these goals.



After outlining the general features of the SDGs, Professor Lingam discussed the fifth SDG goal, that is, the SDG of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This goal aims at:

- Eliminating all forms of discrimination against all women and girls across the world;
- Wiping out all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- Abolishing all harmful practices such as child marriage, early marriage, forced marriage, and female genital mutilations;
- Recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family;
- Ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life; and
- Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conference.

Professor Lingam also elaborately discussed the agendas for approaching the SDG of gender equality, as follows:

- Undertaking reforms to give **women equal rights to economic resources**, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources in accordance with national laws;
- Enhancing the **use of enabling technologies**, in particular ICT, to promote women's empowerment; and
- Adopting and strengthening **sound policies and enforceable legislation** for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at all levels.

Professor Lingam also focused on the major challenges that a country like India with critical gender development indicators would need to address for effectively implementing the aforementioned agendas. As per the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2014), India ranks 114th out of 142 countries in terms of gender equality. The declining sex ratio and the failure to ensure women's rights pertaining to health, sexual and reproduction are major obstacles to the attainment of gender equality. Although enrolment in government schools and colleges is improving, the quality of education and continuation of girl students into higher education is very low. Moreover, employment generation is increasing at a slower pace than desired with a large majority of jobs being available in the unorganised sector. Professor Lingam also listed political participation, access to power and resources like land and important institutions, and involvement in decision-making processes as some of the prime determinants of women's status in a society. She noted that unfortunately women's access to maternity benefits is still not ensured and incidences of violence against women and girls are on the rise. It was also pointed out that an estimated amount of INR 89 lakh crores or USD 1408 billion would be required for implementing various initiatives for gender equality between 2016 and 2030. As regards estimates of poverty globally and in India, she pointed out that 900 million people or 12 per cent of the global population live in extreme poverty, and this figure has been arrived after changing the methodology to arrive at a lower level of poverty estimates. It has also been argued by many researchers that worldwide poverty has shown a decline based on adjustments made to the Purchasing Power Parity of 15 poorest economies. However, these estimates do not take into consideration the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty. According to the 2015 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) counts, 1.6 billion people are multi-dimensionally poor, with the largest global share of this population being in South Asia and the highest intensity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While India has the largest proportion of the world's poor, official estimates indicate that India's poverty rate for 2011-12 was 21.2 per cent, which is a reduction from the earlier decades. She also alluded to serious concerns that these indicators misrepresent and depoliticise the actual lived experiences of development to a majority of the poor men and women. There have been some significant shifts in the conceptualisation of poverty estimates over the years, which indicate that poverty now signifies not just the deprivation

of material resources alone. Policy discourses on poverty and the insertion of women as active agents in managing poverty are more than two decades old.

Factors integral to the reduction in poverty globally include efficiency in investing in women, bringing about improvements in several human development indicators and empowerment of women and girls. However, issues of exclusion and clubbing of women as 'mothers' and protectionism continue. Women's movements have been emphasising women's rights as human rights and as an end in itself rather than a means to other ends.

Limitations in our politics further cripple the agenda for achieving the SDGs. Neither the MDGs nor the SDGs question the macro-development model or the existing inequities between countries. Heloise Weber calls it the “Politics of Method and Mystification of Inequalities”. In understanding poverty, the conceptualisation of poverty and deprivation is crippled by the juxtaposition of the means and ends debates. Does poor health cause poverty? Or does poverty causes poor health? The critiques of the MDGs and SDGs underscore the need to understand the causes of poverty, which are both structurally embedded, as well as socially and politically sanctioned. By attributing poverty to structural causes, these approaches make a strong case for locating the analyses of inequalities first and foremost within a critical political economy analysis of ‘development’ and inequalities.

Professor Lingam also noted the need to emphasize the intersectionality of systemic inequalities. The poor and marginalised also carry identities—Dalits, Muslims, tribals, people with disabilities, transgenders, and so on. Addressing issues of poverty also necessitates an understanding of the multiple grids that stratify the poor and keep them divided. Neither development practices nor civil society discourses have adequately recognised the need to bring all forms of discrimination and marginalisation on the basis of caste, gender, ethnicity and sexual identity on to the same plane in order to synthesise the ‘politics of recognition’ and the ‘politics of redistribution’, as articulated by Nancy Fraser.

The way forward for the SDG on gender equality includes operationalising the commitment to SDGs towards expanding the targets of monetary policy to include creating decent work; mobilising resources to enable investments in social services and transfers; and creating channels for meaningful participation by civil society organisations, including women’s movements, in macroeconomic decision-making. Furthermore, there is need for emphasising demand generation and gender budgeting. Finally, Lingam added, the multi-dimensionality of poverty and intersections of poverty with other identities need to be recognised and addressed.

Poverty, Employment and Inclusive Growth

Chair:

Krishna Kumar

Discussant:

Ashok Pankaj (Presenting
Praveen Jha's Paper)

Speakers:

Jeemol Unni and
Ravikiran Naik
Mona Khare

The Virtuous Cycle of Growth, Employment and Education in India: Path to Equitable Development

Mona Khare, *NEUPA*

This paper delineated state level linkages between education, employment and sustainable development. It classified states as 'virtuous', 'vicious' and 'lop-sided' based on supply-side educational inequalities and demand-side employment inequalities, which together lead to unequal growth. The states have been classified as follows:

Category I: Virtuous cycle (high growth and large gains in human development)—These include the states of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala and Maharashtra.

Category II: Vicious cycle (low growth and low rates of human development)—These include the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Assam.



Category III: Lop-sided (relatively good growth and relatively poor human development or vice versa) These include the states of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka and Punjab.

The paper highlighted that unless the inequalities of quality employment and education were reduced, the virtuous cycle states would remain elitist, while the risk of lop-sided economic growth would keep looming large for most of the states in the country. Hence, given the fact that education and employment are highly intertwined, targeting a high rate of growth should be supported by policies that address the issue of employment as well as the capabilities that generate quality employment. Such capacity building requires not only an increase in the education status but also more importantly, a reduction in education inequalities.

Economic Participation of Women and Inclusive Growth: Study of Women Entrepreneurship in India

Jeemol Unni and Ravikiran Naik, *IRMA*

This paper analysed the determinants of women's entrepreneurship in India. It also argued that women's entrepreneurship is based on both opportunity as well as necessity. For this purpose, it used indicators such as attitudes, motivations and perceptions in its empirical analysis.

The paper suggested that in order to foster opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, policy should emphasise opportunity creation, networking, skill and knowledge upgradation. The same applies to



necessity-based entrepreneurship too, but policy measures also need to consider addressing the fear of failure. It was highlighted that policy framework should not only be able to sustain opportunity-oriented enterprises, but also promote the transition from necessity-based activities to opportunity-seeking business activities. Lastly, gender-based differences in terms of attitudes, motivations and perceptions are also needed to encourage entrepreneurship. This would help in achieving the broader target of inclusive growth and development.

Are We Really Concerned about Employment: Some Reflections on the Current Macroeconomic Policy Regime

Praveen Jha, *Jawaharlal Nehru University*

This paper dealt with the problem of employment in India. It pointed out that employment data indicated that the high growth of the economy was not accompanied by adequate employment generation. Further, over the last 20 years, most of the employment had been generated in the informal sector, while not much was generated in the organised manufacturing and services sector. However, casual and self-employment opportunities had increased, which in turn had social welfare implications. The paper argued that pushing employment in the formal economy would help in promoting inclusive growth.

Discussant's Remarks

Ashok Pankaj,
Council for Social Development

Professor Pankaj summarised the proceedings of the session by suggesting that employment, which is one of the major links in the growth process, is dependent on levels of education and human capital, and all three aspects are required for the pursuit of inclusive growth and development. He argued that the manufacturing sector had to be given



due importance as the scope for job creation was relatively higher in this sector and the sector's share in the GDP had remained stagnant. He raised the issue of conceptual impropriety in defining entrepreneurship in the paper by Unni and Naik. He argued that the definition of entrepreneurship includes both risk-taking and profit-motive behaviour, but both these traits were not seen in the concept of necessity-based entrepreneurship, as it had been defined in the paper.

He felt that further research was required on the following aspects:

- Proper analysis of industrial policies such as the New Industrial Policy;
- The extent to which globalisation had been able to affect overall employment generation;
- The challenges posed by technology to job creation; and
- The changes needed to be made in macro-economic policy.

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Chair's Remarks

R.S. Deshpande, *ISEC*

The chairman thanked the panel for the rich deliberations during the session and also stated that economic growth, employment, poverty, education, entrepreneurship and government policies need to be handled together to foster inclusive growth and development.

Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture

Chair: Utsa Patnaik

Speakers: Mondira Bhattacharya
R. S. Deshpande
Madhura swaminatham

Why We Still Need the System of Public Distribution of Food to Achieve SDG 2

Madhura Swaminathan, *Indian Statistical Institute*

Professor Swaminathan's presentation revolved around the argument that in the background of mass poverty and malnutrition, the historic National Food Security Act (NFSA) passed in 2013 needs to be implemented and strengthened rather than diluted by means of a shift to cash transfers.

She argued that NSFA is biggest in the world in terms of its coverage, but as compared to the US situation in terms of financial outlay, the Indian Public Distribution System (PDS) stands nowhere. The expenditure of approximately 1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for nearly 67 per cent of the population is a negligible expenditure for meeting the target of achieving food security, especially if we take into account the fact that one-third of the Indian



population is malnourished. Justifying her arguments by providing a comparative statistical analysis, She averred that NFSA recognised 75 per cent of the rural and 50 per cent of the urban population to be poor and thus to be covered under the programme. She compared the food share criteria (that is, the percentage of income/salary spent on food) to identify poor and food-insecure people. In the US, the rule entails anybody spending more than one-third of their income/salary on food to be considered poor enough to be covered under food security. If we follow this criterion, then 95 per cent of the rural and 90 per cent of the urban households in India would have to be defined as 'poor'. Even if it is argued that India cannot afford to follow the US criterion, then at least it should follow the corresponding criterion of China, wherein those spending more than 50 per cent of their income/salary are considered to be food-insecure.

Professor Swaminathan strictly criticised the proposed system of conditional cash transfers. She traced back the historical evolution of policies for food security in India which had resulted in the creation of the PDS. The evidence over the last decade clearly shows that the PDS has a significant impact on poverty and nutrition. The impact has been larger in states with universal coverage than those with a narrowly targeted coverage, simply because we have under-estimated the poverty in the country and the coverage of food-insecure people is much lower than that in the US and China in terms of the food share criteria. Further, the introduction of cash transfers would lead to two major problems: first, it would increase inflation (the demand pull inflation with people chasing the same quantity of food with more money), and second, if there would be no demand for the total food procured, the poor farmers will become vulnerable to a larger price variability risk. It must not be forgotten that public procurement at a remunerative price has been a key factor in stimulating and sustaining the Green Revolution.

While strongly justifying the continuation of the PDS, she also recommended expansion of the food basket of the PDS by including nutritious cereals as well as pulses, and oils in it, which would not only help address the nutritional problem but also encourage the practice of diversified agriculture. For this purpose, various aspects of the agricultural policy such as the minimum support price and procurement policy also need to be diversified and made effective for crops other than rice and wheat.

Macro Masking to Micro Realities: Access to Food and Nutrition among Tribals

R.S. Deshpande, *ISEC*, Nitin Tagade

Professor Deshpande argued that food security has been a major concern in India since the last century and that a number of policies have been made and strategies formulated to overcome food and nutrition deficiency, but till date India cannot be said to be comfortable in terms of food availability. Even after six decades of Independence, the backward districts continued to be backward and there



are some social groups and regions that have stayed far behind the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing hunger by half along with the other 10 indicators. In this context, on the basis of a field study of the tribal-dominated areas of Maharashtra, Professor Deshpande argued that SDG 2 is nothing but a distant dream, particularly for tribal people.

He highlighted the micro level issue of food insecurity and access

to food in the tribal-dominated areas of Maharashtra while pointing out that one tends to miss the real picture that gets masked by the macro level data. A comparison of food insecurity between the two groups reveals a higher incidence of food insecurity among the tribal as compared to their non-tribal counterparts. The nutritional status of tribal children is also far lower than that of non-tribal children. Interestingly, tribal people who collect their food from the forest have been found to be better nourished than tribal people, who rely mostly only on the food collected from the PDS outlets. Various policies have changed the food basket of the tribal people. The monthly supply of rations from PDS outlets is also inadequate for them and they have to depend on forest resources beyond this inadequate supply. Thus, if denied access to forest resources, the tribal communities become more vulnerable to food insecurity. Hence, state initiatives on building tribal areas as food-sufficient regions in their own respective food baskets, such as *bajra*, and *ragi*, could help tribal communities overcome food insecurity and meet the SDG 2.

Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture in India

Mondira Bhattacharya, Ankita Goyal and T. Haque, *CSD*

Dr. Bhattacharya assessed the food security situation of the country through supply side factors such as productivity of principal crops, levels of poverty, extent of malnutrition and access to sanitation, safe drinking water and health care, which are particularly important for improving the food absorption capacity of people. Her analysis was based on the available secondary data on these aspects. She presented several facts in tabular form, revealing that though the yield of principal crops has increased over time in India, the growth rates have fallen. Further, though the estimated poverty level has declined but the net availability of food has not increased, and though access to sanitation and safe drinking water has increased, the level of these services is much below than what is required. The amount of out-of-pocket expenditure on health care is already very high and is bound to increase further with rising life expectancy levels.



Sustainable agriculture is based on principles and options which are ecologically sound, economically feasible and culturally acceptable. Dr. Bhattacharya viewed sustainable agriculture as a complementarity between the usage of non-chemical and chemical fertilisers, water use efficiency in agriculture such as the drip and sprinkler systems of irrigation, water harvesting and water-efficient cropping pattern changes. She emphasised the existence of an enormous untapped scope of sustainable agriculture as the number of areas under non-chemical fertilisers and crop intensification is quite low.

She advised the shift of cropping patterns to water-efficient varieties like coarse cereals and also an increased emphasis on leguminous crops, which help in nitrogen fixation in the soil, thereby enhancing its fertility.

Discussion

The discussion focused on Issues like regional food diversity, community-based food management, and food sovereignty and self-sufficiency. The chair Utsa Patnaik slammed the very idea of cash transfer (instead of PDS) on the premise that there is no way to guarantee that the amount thus transferred would be spent only on food.

Social Marginalisation and Inequality

Chair:

K B Saxena

Speakers:

Manoranjan Mohanty

Zoya Hasan

Badri Narayan

Chair's Opening Remark

The session on Social Marginalisation and Inequality focused on the structural aspect of the present discourse, covering social issues in a historical context in the backdrop of economic liberalisation and globalisation. It is perceived that after Independence, affirmative action programmes have attempted to deal with these problems in a very half-hearted and inadequate manner, and whatever little was proposed has also been diluted over time or poorly implemented. A glaring example of this outcome is the continued poverty of the areas and the people who were identified as the most backward and the poorest in 1960 at the time of the Second Five Year Plan, and these persons and regions continue to be in the same position, or are probably worse off. In the neo-liberalisation era, both marginalisation and inequality have mutated into newer forms. The inefficient implementation of the affirmative action has thus created a new situation of marginalisation within marginalisation.

Inequality—The Cause of Deprivation: A Theoretical Argument

Manoranjan Mohanty, *Council for Social Development*

Equality is no longer the dominant concern of elites either in India or globally. There has been a rise in marginalisation, inequalities and disparity with respect to both the conventional parameters of caste, class, ethnicity and regions, as well as of new indicators like access to knowledge, clean environment, and natural resources; cultural and defence capacities; communication technology; voice in the media; institutional space; new forms of political power, and so on. Professor Mohanty posited that the issue of inequality had receded into the background of SDGs despite the listing of SDG 5 and SDG 10, that is, the sustainable goals of attaining Gender Equality, and of Reducing Inequality between and within nations, respectively. He argued that the very objective of reducing inequality and the concomitant discourse pose a problem. This was his critique of the MDGs and it also applies to the SDGs.



Professor Mohanty outlined three major concerns in the current context, next only to growth, viz. technology, environment and culture. The discourse emphasises the need to improve the use of all kinds of technology, including communication technology, military technology, and production technology, among others. Second, concern for the environment is a very genuine one and cannot be ignored, thereby necessitating an analysis of all the factors that lead to environmental decay. Third, the challenges of terrorism and the discourse on civilisation and culture the world over have led to a very peculiar interest in culture. The present agenda thus seems to focus more on the preservation of the

environment and culture rather than on promoting equality, freedom and justice. Interestingly, today people are, more than ever before, intensely conscious of their democratic and human rights, and of safeguarding their individual dignity as well as the dignity of the social and religious groups they belong to and the region they live in. Professor Mohanty, therefore, averred that commitment to the promotion of equality through positive programmes needs to be at the centre of development policies, strategies and programmes in for addressing all serious problems and for comprehensive social development.

It was pointed out that over the last 200 years, since the inception of the Industrial Revolution model, various phases, including the present silicon phase, have progressively abandoned the serious commitment to promoting equality. Equality was one of the earlier values of liberal democracy and capitalism, but today, it has been pushed to the background, and it is being increasingly suggested that achieving high economic growth is a more important goal than achieving equality even though there is evidence that high economic growth does not produce either employment or greater equality.

This paradox has to be examined at three levels—the intellectual level or discourse level, the development level, and the political level. As regards the intellectual level, inclusion has replaced equality as a value or goal to be achieved and aspects such as freedom, justice and injustice, oppression and liberation, these are not the terms of discourse anymore. The new terms of discourse are thus inclusion, exclusion, and governance. This discourse was initiated by the World Bank and Ford Foundation, among other agencies, about twenty years ago. There is an urgent need to restore the discourse of the freedom struggle, the anti-colonial struggle and the early planning literature of the 1960s and 1970s. The new statistical system is also built upon this new discourse, which has engendered the glaring mismatch between econometrics and philosophy.

Second, the development model propounds the idea of growth with welfare, but that is not working in the rights era, the People's Rights Age. The focus of globalisation during the last decade has been on increasing growth through the implementation of welfare measures like MGNREGA, the Food Security Act, and the Public Distribution System (PDS). Although these measures are by themselves quite welcome, it must be realised that they are only short-term relief measures, and cannot preclude the need for long-term egalitarian measures like the promotion of education, healthcare, employment and productive assets, for building the capacities of individuals, groups and regions.

The third level at which equality has suffered a setback is at the political level. Professor Mohanty rued that democracy has, in the present context, been reduced to procedural functioning amidst the persistence of inequality and 'unfreedom', and the rise of deprivation in new areas. There has been a strange reduction of democracy into the manipulation of procedures, and the comprehensive meaning of democracy has to be restored and propagated. The concept of democracy has no meaning without caste equality, gender justice and gender equality, and elimination of domination by certain sections of society like landlords and the high-castes. Hence, the discursive retreat, the economic fallacy and the political defeat of substantive democracy are the three processes which have led to the deprivation of freedom, alienation of a large part of the society and consequently, violence. In the absence of a focus on equality, the MDGs and now the SDGs suffer from a fundamental conceptual flaw. In this context, many social movements in India and around the globe are justifiably asserting the centrality of equality in the contemporary world as the right response to the contemporary human predicament.

Elite Dominance and Rising Inequality in India

Zoya Hasan, *Council for Social Development*

Growing inequality is one of the central issues of the present discourse and thus requires close examination. Apart from an economic analysis, the situation in India also calls for an analysis of politics and policy that allow certain politically and economically powerful groups to control and manipulate not just economic activities but also democratic processes. Professor Hasan's presentation briefly examines the politics of inequalities, primarily the impact of elite dominance on inequalities and eventually on people's well-being. Her principal concern is an exposition of the political factors driving inequality, and she explores how political processes, especially those pertaining to elite capture or elite dominance, intensify inequality with regard to income and wealth. The paper starts with a short statement on economic inequalities, then discusses the factors driving inequality, what can be done to tackle inequality and the persistent indifferences in India, and concludes that these indifferences are deeply related to the nature of political processes in India.

Income inequalities in India have been on the rise during the past two decades, reflecting several dimensions across regions, across urban and rural areas, and across class lines, especially in the cities. Since the 1990s, a series of market-oriented business-friendly economic reforms have contributed significantly to the rising inequality. The scenario is even worse with regard to



social inequality and gender. As per the Credit Series Report, 2014, the richest 1 per cent of the Indians owned 53 per cent of the country's wealth, while 10 per cent held nearly three-quarters of the total wealth. Put starkly, this implies that 90 per cent of the population in India owns less than a quarter of the country's wealth. According to the Credit Series, the share of the top 1 per cent increased from roughly 37 per cent in 2000 to close to half of the country's total wealth in 2014, which shows that 1 per cent of the country's population owns half the country's wealth. As we know, much of this wealth is derived from land, from real estate, construction, mines, including land and capital, access to education, and so on. The question that needs to be addressed is what is driving inequality, and what is responsible for its dramatic rise in contemporary India. It is believed that a major share of the inequality is linked with the model of growth, which emanates from a certain policy framework. Further, socio-economic policies that have dominated India's development agenda since the advent of economic liberalisation in the 1990s have been the most influential force driving wealth inequalities. Nonetheless, this model has neglected agriculture, and millions of small farmers, landless agricultural labourers, rural non-agricultural workers and urban industrial workers. The biggest drawback of this model is that it has created a shortage of jobs.

The second most powerful force driving the rapid rise in inequalities is the elite capture of the policy space owing to the State's commitment to high growth and the close alliance forged by the State with the private sector in an effort to achieve its goal. Hence, the concentration of economic and political

power goes hand in hand, which further intensifies inequality. Over time, the State has assumed a strongly pro-business orientation with the conspicuous domination of the corporate elite on India's economic horizon. The last twenty years have, in fact, seen the massive growth of corporate power, which has acquired unparalleled significance, displacing the legitimacy previously enjoyed by the developmental states.

The elites use their political influence to obtain favours from the government, such as tax exemptions, land concessions, and subsidies while blocking policies that seek to protect the rights of the poor. In this way, the strong mutually beneficial relationship between business and politics eventually leads to the implementation of distorted economic policies and development outcomes. The massive lobbying power of the corporate sector to bend rules in its favour has increased the concentration of power and money in the hands of the few. One of the most conspicuous indications of this development was seen in the attempt made by the present Government to enact the Land Acquisition Act, as also the introduction of a series of three ordinances to reverse a large part of what had been done by the previous government. However, due to massive opposition coming from the farmers the government had to step back and shelve the proposed Land Acquisition Act.

The third closely related issue is that of the political processes which allow certain politically and economically powerful groups to control and manipulate not just economic activities but also democratic processes. Lack of money power often constrains political participation for an individual and hence electoral representation in India has become the privilege of the wealthy. The two key drivers of this political inequality, especially with regard to representation, are election finance and a highly flawed party funding system, which engender the politics of inequality in India by driving political parties to misuse the government's discretionary powers to raise funds for election campaigns. The massive scale of funds used in elections in the country also encourages the major involvement of the private sector for whom election expenditure is just another investment yielding a stupendous gain in the form of patronage. This is also not a subject of significant discussion, as the role played by real estate tycoons and builders in funding election expenditure has not been systematically examined. It may be observed that many contestants in the 17th Lok Sabha election declared business as their primary occupation, and that 82 per cent of the current Members of Parliament (MPs) in the 17th Lok Sabha have assets worth 1 crore each, as declared by them, which is much higher than the corresponding amounts declared in the 16th or 15th Lok Sabha elections. In the first Lok Sabha election, less than 10 per cent of the contestants had declared business as their primary occupation, which has gone up to 20 per cent in the recent elections.

The question of inequality can really be addressed by analysing the structural reasons for the disparities. One way of addressing the problem is to curb the nexus between big business and politics, primarily by enhancing public funding for elections. However, in India, we are going in the opposite direction, with greater of privatisation everywhere including the elections.

A number of attempts have been made to deal with the rising inequalities in India in the form of three distinct processes over the past 10-15 years though they have not yielded the desired results. First is the socio-legal activism, second is the expanding ambit of social activism in society, and the third is the substitution of political patronage and the patron-client relationship which hitherto informed political processes in India with legal rights. However, given the prevalent circumstances, some of the rights-based laws or interventions that have been made have been really significant in addressing some of the problems faced by people, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Right to Information (RTI) Act, and the Right to Education (RTE), among others.

In the context of rising inequalities, especially during the last 10-15 years, successive governments have taken a series of social welfare measures. However, the present government has shown no urgency either with regard to the implementation of these measures or in suggesting an alternative framework for social welfare. Here, it may be pointed out that rising inequality has, in fact, emerged as one of the most serious problems confronting societies across the world.

Thomas Piketty's book, *Capitalism in the Twenty-first Century* delineates these imperatives, and points out that the focus should be more on social inequalities rather than economic inequalities. Albeit, economic inequalities cannot be ignored but the advent of economic liberalisation has also fomented widespread social, caste and class inequalities, which need to be tackled urgently. Secondly, the political establishment has done little to address this problem. For example, in 2012, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, in its 59th report, 'The Current Economic Situation and Policy Options', criticised the growth strategy, claiming that farmers were excluded from growth, and that the gains were reaching only a few. This report also noted a widening gap between the rich and the poor, and the increasingly disproportionate distribution of assets in the country. India's political process has no clear vision of how to tackle the issues of concentration of wealth, crony capitalism, jobless growth and the crisis in agriculture. Over the past few years, the demands for change have been getting louder in India. Hence, there is a need to ensure that development debates and actions at all levels prioritise discussions on poverty, inequality, exclusion, and issues affecting the underprivileged sections.

Invisibles in Democracy: Most Marginalised Dalit Communities in Uttar Pradesh

Badri Narayan, *Jawaharlal Nehru University*

State-led democracy is like a still camera lens: those who are close to the camera lens manage to get their pictures in the photo whereas the pictures of those who are far from the lens are blurred while those who are too far from the lens remain invisible.

People who are invisible in a democracy do not even enjoy the status of subaltern citizens or Dalits. They are neither able to articulate their everyday experiences of discrimination in a caste-oriented society nor are they capable of visualising the State as an

emancipatory agency or deriving any benefits from it. This section of the marginalised classes includes a majority of the 60-65 castes designated as Scheduled Castes, as only 4-5 of these comprise the dominant castes that enjoy visibility at the top level in every state.

The rest of the castes do not have a voice and thus lack both recognition and value. The dominant Dalit castes are visible because of their numerical strength and because they belong to larger communities



among the Dalits. They have also acquired education during colonial rule, and have both the capacity and competence, and politics of representation to be able to derive benefits from the Government under various State policies.

This is manifested in the history of formation of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh, wherein the Chamar community played a significant role, but the remaining caste groups were sidelined and pushed to the margins. The latter groups account for very small populations of 1-3 per cent of the total Dalit community and are scattered in various parts of the state, which also prevents the possibility of capacity building for them. They also do not enjoy any perceived political value, and consequently are neither wooed by the ruling class nor find any opportunity to get elected as MLAs and MPs.

Professor Badri Narayan cited the example of a boy in Mushar village near Varanasi, who had failed in high school but started doing a lot of community work by visiting the block and district offices to make cards for the employees there, which, in turn, helped him garner attention for his community. Only this kind of activism and involvement can empower members of the severely marginalised communities, and help them acquire both education and employment besides giving them a voice to express their needs and aspirations.

Professor Narayan pointed out that in the 2007 UP Assembly election, 108 of the total MLAs of the BSP belonged to the *Chamar* caste, whereas the other Dalit communities did not find any representation in the Assembly. This kind of selective democracy thus empowers a few communities, on one hand, while it disempowers many of the other under-privileged communities, on the other hand. This process of simultaneous empowerment of the few and disempowerment of the many is the result of both State neglect as well as the respective community's apathy and failure to become a part of the development narrative.

The castes that have acquired political visibility have histories and cultural resources but those who have no visibility do not even have any caste histories, let alone any prominent leaders to take them out of the morass of illiteracy and social invisibility.

There are also other reasons for marginalisation of the already disadvantaged communities. Most of the castes have their traditional occupations. With the advent of globalisation and the emergence of a new market, those in power seek to exploit them by forcing them to work as labourers and contribute to economic growth. Paradoxically, these communities desperately want to retain their traditional occupations but since these do not ensure livelihoods for them, they are often compelled to abandon them for sustaining themselves through other work.

The rise of the *chamars* in the democratic set-up in UP has empowered them significantly. There are other instances of disempowerment to show how people are excluded from the democratic process and how the smaller castes are suffering. In a village in Ghazipur, for instance, a doctor refused to treat a bamboo cutter because of his status as an untouchable, as a result of which he died. And in the same village, the same doctor used to treat other empowered Dalits including a *chamar*, a *paarsi*, and a *dhobi*. Since these Dalits have acquired visibility and numerical strength, they are able to lead better lives. However, the number of such empowered castes is still quite small, and only 4-5 castes have succeeded in acquiring visibility during the last 20 years since the ascendancy of the BSP as a democratic power in UP. Even as far as government and political jobs are concerned, only a few Dalit communities like the *Chamars*, *Paarsis*, *Khoris* and *Dhobis* have benefited whereas a majority of the other Dalit castes have failed to derive any benefits or attain socio-economic growth because of their lack of education and competence.

Discussion

The primary issue that emerged from the discussion was that an extra-powerful state would end up as being autocratic and thus hamper democracy whereas a weak state would lead to mis-governance and the dilution of democracy. It was also observed that the term 'weak state' should not only refer to poor law and order as that signifies only part of the problem. The other problems such as those of regional inequality, under-development and prevalence of identity politics should also be taken into account.



Further, it is important to ensure that even the marginalised and minority communities have a voice and be allowed to partake of power. We also need to establish a democratic, participatory and decentralised state, which is committed to promote the values enshrined in the Constitution and to fulfil the aspiration for equality among the population. Efforts should also be made towards capacity building through the implementation of education and healthcare initiatives, which, in turn, will help promote equality.

Closing Remarks by the Chair

The issue of inequality was recognised in the Planning Commission but economists gave up soon enough on this because they thought that pursuing it would disturb the growth process. Since then, the growth of fundamentalism has pushed the issue of addressing inequality further away from the development agenda. The advent of globalisation has added to the process of obliteration of social objective of equality. The second issue to be considered is that of the retreat of the State from affirmative actions, a retreat that has been gradual, but which is surely leading to the dismantling of all affirmative actions. Hence, if marginalisation and globalisation have to be tackled, both the rise of fundamentalism and the retreat of the State from affirmative action would have to be challenged.

International Committment and India's Performance in Social Development

Chair:

Muchkund Dubey

Speakers:

Mitu Sengupta

Soumya Swaminathan

J.B.G. Tilak

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – An Evaluation from the Perspective of Developing Countries

Mitu Sengupta, *Ryerson University*

The first speaker at the session, Mitu Sengupta, initiated her presentation on “The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – An Evaluation from the Perspective of Developing Countries”, by elucidating the strengths and ostensible weaknesses of both the MDGs and SDGs. According to her, the strengths of the SDGs are that they are more open and



consultative than the MDGs, the delineation of 17 goals and 169 targets which signals global recognition of a comprehensive and progressive view of development, setting of zero goals such as eradication of poverty and hunger, laying down of standalone goals on inequality and climate change, and the focus on non-discrimination and leaving no one behind. While some of the targets are relevant to developing countries, some others are nationally determinable. Each goal also specifies the means of its implementation, thereby entailing a strong commitment to the realisation of human rights for all and robust global partnerships.

Professor Sengupta then went on to discuss the critiques of SDGs. She pointed to the lack of a metric with which to compare the SDGs, and pointed to the ambivalence of the objectives such as evaluating SDGs from the perspective of a developing country. The other flaws in the SDGs include the lack of any reference to important provisions of the ICCPR, the fact that inequality is not integrated into other goals in a cross-cutting manner, and that the means of implementing the stipulated targets do not tackle the root causes of development conundrums. Sengupta then alluded to SDG-17, which precludes a mention of systemic changes. She also remarked that no concrete responsibilities are assigned to the world’s most powerful agents and that the private sector has been disputably elevated to the level of a critical partner for sustainable development. She ended her presentation by discussing the priority issues for developing countries such as the reduction of inequality among various countries, economic growth and employment, the need for respecting national policy space, operationalising of common and yet differentiated responsibilities for achieving justice, and enhancing the participation of developing countries in norm-setting bodies.

Financing Education for Sustainable Development

J.B.G. Tilak, *National University of Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA)*



The second speaker of the session, J.B.G. Tilak, made a presentation on Financing Education for Sustainable Development. He argued that quality education, which is Goal 4 in the SDGs, should be inclusive, and equitable quality education should be ensured for all. We need a sustainable financing model for realising long-term development goals. He asserted that the three Q's of education are

quantitative expansion, equity in education, and ensuring the quality of education. He also presented comparative data of expenditure on education in India and at the international level, and highlighted the trends pertaining to financing of education, viz. the concentration of limited resources on expansion, inadequate investments in equity-related aspects, inadequate investment on the quality of education, and volatile fluctuations in annual funding. Expressing concern at the low levels of investment in quality-related items, he stressed that developing a sustainable education system necessitates liberal public funding of education, a significant increase in public funding, promotion of free school education and highly subsidised higher education, reduction in reliance on the private sector and on cost recovery measures, a steady flow of funds, and focus on quality education. He also outlined the need for tax reforms, restructuring of subsidies, marginal relocation, linking the increase in tax revenues to education and social sector spending, and cutting down the reliance on cess as viable measures for generating more resources. Professor Tilak ended his presentation with the argument that a sustainable education system can be achieved by recognising the public good nature of education, adopting a comprehensive and holistic approach, implementation of a long-term policy, generous state funding, and political commitment.

Health in SDGs

Soumya Swaminathan, *Indian Council for Medical Research*

The next speaker, Soumya Swaminathan, talked about the issue of 'Health in SDGs'. She stated that since healthcare is a public good, it should be backed by a comprehensive policy that is sustainable in the long term. Although the initial objective was to spend 2.5 per cent of the GDP on healthcare, currently we are spending less than even one per cent of the GDP on health. The overall expenditure on health in the country is about 4 per cent, out of which three-fourths is out-of-pocket expenditure whereas the contribution of the Government is less than 1 per cent. She also pointed out that while the MDGs were more focused on reducing maternal, infant and under-five mortality as also a few communicable diseases, particularly HIV/AIDs, malaria, and tuberculosis, the pattern of terminal diseases has been shifting since the advent of the SDGs. It is thus imperative to focus on the priority areas in

India and to ensure that Indian policy is based on the burden of diseases causing deaths in the country rather than on international trends and requirements.

She argued that though India has failed to achieve the MDG target, the sustained focus by the Government on maternal and child healthcare over the last decade has helped bring down maternal mortality from

450 to 160, infant mortality below 40 per cent, improvement in immunisation coverage, introduction of a new vaccination system, and the efficient functioning of the entire health system including Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) overseeing the Village Health Nutrition (VHN) network, and Auxiliary Nurses and Midwives.

During the last analysis, it was observed that non-communicable or cardiovascular and neurological diseases like hyper-tension and diabetes were the major contributors to death, but these diseases now account for only about 60 per cent of the deaths occurring due to non-communicable diseases. However, the alarming fact that suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 15-24 years, followed by injuries and violence, is often ignored. Since the issue of mental health is not accorded sufficient importance, there is presently no major programme for preventing depression and suicide among the young population. Another significant area which needs attention is that of malnutrition and stunting, which have serious repercussions in terms of a long-term adverse impact on cognitive development, and yet has not been effectively addressed in any programme so far.

She also emphasised the need for adopting a holistic approach by simultaneously focusing on the spheres of education, health and nutrition as all these are interlinked. Further, in view of the availability of multiple sources of data collection now, with each survey on health and nutrition using different methodologies and definitions, there is lack of comparability. She expressed concern at the fact that no comprehensive health survey has been undertaken since the last ten years. In addition, comprehensive action is not always taken on the available data. The data are also aggregated at the state or Central levels and rarely go down to the village level, which leads to a very low level of village/community participation in India. The other suggestions she offered were that external aid should be integrated into National Health Mission; prevention should be discussed as an integral component of primary health; and that the tax on tobacco and alcohol should come back to the health sector, and be invested in the prevention programme. Thus, in order to carve out a sustainable path for healthcare and reduce the burden of diseases in the community, it is important to focus on primary care versus tertiary care. India should also derive lessons from the countries that have done well in primary health care. She also discussed the issues of decentralisation of planning and execution, and the adoption of a more participatory approach to health entailing involvement of the village health and nutrition society, and addressing the issue of out-of-pocket expenditure, as also development of the Health Technology Assessment Board and privatisation of health services. She concluded her presentation by pointing out that for achieving the SDGs and moving forward, we need a health system that would focus not just on quantity, but also on quality and equity and offering cost-effective solutions to health issues.



Remarks by the Chair



Providing a different perspective on the MDG approach, Muchkund Dubey emphasised the need to view MDGs in the context and circumstances in which they were initiated, as also their impact and implications for the UN and its development agenda. The particular events that have relevance for the SDGs

and the MDGs earlier include weakening of the UN starting from the early 1980s carrying on into the 1990s, and the transfer of the UN charter functions in the hard core areas of economics, especially the international financial and trading systems, outside of the UN.

Professor Dubey also alluded to the concept of the core competence of the UN, which in recent times, has unfortunately narrowed down to disaster management and so-called post-war rebuilding, with whatever financial resources the UN is able to procure from the IMF, World Bank and other donors. In fact, the then Director-General of WTO, from New Zealand, remarked that the UN has effectively been reduced to a *“super-duper red cross”*. It was also pointed out that the UN is no longer a centre for harmonisation of the policies of its member states, as expounded in Article 1 of the Charter, nor even an agency to promote international cooperation on humanitarian and social issues. Quoting Gamani Corea, the erstwhile Director-General of UNCTAD, Professor Dubey said that *“it [had become] a place like self-help kits for developing countries”*. Another worrisome development has been a severe squeezing of the UN Budget, and the adoption of a policy of nominal growth of the Budget. This freeze on the UN Budget, which has been applicable for the last 25-30 years has inevitably had an adverse impact on the efficacy and functioning of the institution, leading to a diminishing of its core competence, with most countries now seeking financial assistance from the World Bank and other institutions. It is this in context that the MDGs were launched, which not only augured structural changes but themselves became a part of the structural change taking place in the UN. He questioned the wisdom of the UN adopting such an ambitious programme when it lacked both the resources and the competence to execute it. The conclusion of the stipulated period for implementation of the MDGs represented a glorious opportunity for the UN to return to its original agenda rather than move headlong into another challenging programme of the SDGs. The UN should instead concentrate on its original Charter and gradually branch out into new areas after acquiring the expertise to execute them. He concluded by expressing concern at the prevalent situation and its repercussions for the world order and the international economic system, as it could lead to further marginalisation of the UN and diminution of its basic function in the UN Charter.

Concluding Remarks

R. Govinda, Council for Social Development

The session ended with Professor Govinda's concluding remarks. He noted the gradual but distinct change in the vocabulary being used for the UN and its activities. Secondly, he pointed out that the central point of discussion during the two-day seminar, was an "increase in equality", which needs to be analysed further. The third significant pointer of the seminar was the centrality of education in overcoming inequality in every sector. Hence, this inequality can be combated only if we augment our investment in education to an appreciable degree.



Annex 1

National Seminar on

INDIAN PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SECTOR ISSUES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) POLICIES, PROSPECTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Provisional Programme Schedule

Day 1: 15 July 2016		
9.30-10:00 AM	Tea and Registration	
Rapporteur: Prashant, CSD		
10:00-11:00 AM	Welcome & Introduction	R. Govinda , Distinguished Professor, CSD
	Address: <i>Perspective on SDGs (Goal 4) in South Asia</i>	Shigeru Aoyagi , Director & UNESCO, <i>Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka</i>
	Inaugural Address by Chief Guest	Kishore Singh , United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education
	Chairman's Remarks	Muchkund Dubey , President, CSD
	Vote of Thanks	Poornima M , CSD
11:00 - 11:30AM	Tea Break	
Education and Skill Development Rapporteur: Aparajita Sharma, RTE Forum		
11:30 - 1:00 PM	Chair	Krishna Kumar , CIE, DU
	Speakers	Preet Rustagi , Swati Dutta and DeekshaTayal, IHD, <i>SDGs for School Education in India: Issues and Challenges</i>
		Santosh Mehrotra , JNU & Vinay Swarup Mehrotra, NCERT, <i>Challenges Beyond Schooling: Innovative Models for Youth Skills Development in India</i>
		N.V.Varghese , CPRHE, NUEPA, <i>Knowledge, Skills & Sustainable Development: Role of Higher Education in a Stage of Massification</i>

1.00 - 2.00 PM Lunch		
Health and Nutrition Rapporteur: Arathi.P.M, CSD		
2.00 - 3.30 PM	Chair	Srinath Reddy , President, PHFI
	Speakers	Imrana Qadeer , CSD, <i>Public Health Policies: Generating Revenues or Relief?</i>
		Gita Sen , IIM-B/PHFI, <i>The "Health SDG" in India: Advances and Concerns</i>
		T Sundararaman , TISS, <i>SDG 3: Taking It Seriously</i>
3.30 - 3.45 PM Tea Break		
Towards Gender Equality Rapporteur: Anamika Priyadarshini, CSD		
3.45 - 5.15 PM	Chair	Mary E. John , CWDS
	Speakers	SuneetaDhar , Jagori, <i>Towards Gender Equality</i>
		Lakshmi Lingam , TISS, <i>Towards Gender Equality & Poverty: Tracking Policies & Programmes</i>
		Vimala Ramachandran , ERU Consultants Pvt. Ltd., <i>Will the SDGs be more effective than MDGs: Reflection on Gender Equality in India</i>
Day 2: 16 July 2016		
Poverty, Employment and Inclusive Growth Rapporteur: Poornima M & Ramandeep Kaur, CSD		
10:00 - 11:30AM	Chair	Jayati Ghosh , JNU
	Discussant	Prof. Ashok K. Pankaj , CSD
	Speakers	Praveen Jha , JNU, <i>Are we really concerned about Employment: Some Reflections on Current Macro Economic Policy Regime</i>
		Jeemol Unni & Ravikiran Naik , IRMA, <i>Economic Participation of Women & Inclusive Growth: Study of Women Entrepreneurship in India</i>
		Mona Khare , NUEPA, <i>The Virtuous Cycle of Growth, Employment and Education in India: Path to Equitable Development</i>
11:30 - 11:45AM Tea Break		
Technical Session 5: Food Security & Sustainable Agriculture Rapporteur: Susmita Mitra, CSD		
11:45 - 1:15 PM	Chair	Utsa Patnaik , JNU
	Speakers	T. Haque, Mondira Bhattacharya and Ankita Goyal , CSD <i>Food Security & Sustainable Agriculture in India</i>
		R.S. Deshpande , ISEC and Nitin Tagade , IIDS, <i>Access to Food and Nutrition for Tribals: Long distance to MDG</i>
		Madhura Swaminathan , ISI – <i>Policies for Food Security & Sustainable Agriculture</i>
1:15 - 2.15 PM Lunch		
Social Marginalisation and Inequality Rapporteur: Mondira Bhattacharya, CSD		
2.15 - 3.45 PM	Chair	K.B. Saxena , CSD
	Speakers	Manoranjan Mohanty , CSD, <i>Inequality – The Cause of Deprivation</i>
		Zoya Hassan , CSD, <i>Elite Dominance and Growing Inequality in India</i>
		Badri Narayan , JNU, <i>Invisibles in Democracy: Most Marginalised Dalit Communities in Uttar Pradesh</i>

3.45 - 4.00 PM Tea Break

Closing Session: Panel Discussion on International Commitment & India's Performance in Social Development

Rapporteur: Ramandeep Kaur & Jaya Lakshmi Nair , CSD

4.00 - 5.30 PM	Chair	MuchkundDubey , President, <i>CSD</i>
	Speakers	MituSengupta , Ryerson University, Toronto
		SoumyaSwaminathan , D-G, ICMR
	Closing Remarks & Next Steps	J. Tilak , V.C., NUEPA R. Govinda , CSD

Annex 2

Final List of Participants

- 1. Shigeru Aoyagi**
Director & UNESCO Representative to Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka
- 2. Kishore Singh,**
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education
- 3. Dr. Vineeta Sharma**
NHSRC, New Delhi
- 4. Mr. Ramachandran Begur,**
Education Specialist, UNICEF
- 5. Dr. Anjana Mangalagiri,**
Chief Education UNICEF, New Delhi
- 6. Anita Dighe**
4-F, Kalidas Road, New IIRS Deheradun
- 7. Prof. NV Varghese**
Director of Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CRHE)
NUEPA, New Delhi
- 8. J. B. Tilak**
NUEPA, New Delhi
- 9. R S Deshpandey**
Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangaluru
- 10. Gita Sen**
Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health, PHFI
- 11. Madhura Swaminathan**
Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Bangaluru
- 12. Dr. K. Srinath Reddy**
Public Health Foundation India, New Delhi
- 13. Ashok Pankaj, Professor**
CSD, New Delhi
- 14. Bidyut Mohanty**
Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi
- 15. T. Sundararaman**
School of Health Systems Studies, TISS, Mumbai
- 16. Byasadev Nath**
Ministry of Home Affairs, GoI, New Delhi
- 17. Dr. Jinusha Panijnahi**
CPRHE, NUEPA, New Delhi
- 18. Ravikiran Naik**
Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA), Gujarat
- 19. Prof. Mona Khare**
NUEPA, New Delhi
- 20. Prof. Imrana Qadeer, Professor**
CSD, New Delhi
- 21. Dr. Vineeta Sharma**
NHSRC, New Delhi
- 22. Hari Mohan Mathur**
CSD, New Delhi
- 23. Gillian Wright**
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24. **Ms. Shreya Tiwari**
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25. **Dr. John Kurrien**
26. **Dr. OscmaUmmer**
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27. **Sajan Bhandarkar**
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi
28. **R R Prasad**
Head I/C Centre for Equity & Social Development (CESD) NIRD & PR, Hyderabad
29. **Dr. M. Samantha**
Research Fellow, ICWA, Sapru House, New Delhi-110001
30. **Prof. K B Saxena**
Council for Social Development, New Delhi
31. **Mitu Sengupta**
Ryerson University, Toronto
32. **Marry John**
Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi
33. **Prof. Avinash K. Singh**
Department of Educational Policy, NUEPA, New Delhi
34. **Dr. Nidhi Sabharwal**
NUEPA, New Delhi
35. **Prof. Zoya Hasan**
Council for Socia development, New Delhi
36. **Dr. Soumya Swaminathan,**
DG, Indian Council for medical reserarch , New Delhi
37. **Dr. Mayank Sharma**
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi
38. **Dr. Jajendra Kosa**
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi
39. **Mondira Bhattacharya**
Assistant professor, CSD, New Delhi
40. **Mannika Chopra**
CSD, New Delhi
41. **Dr. Mona Sedwal**
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NUEPA, New Delhi
42. **Sushmitra Mitra**
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43. **Prof. Rashmi Diwan**
NUEPA, New Delhi
44. **Swati Dutta**
Institute for Human Development, New Delhi
45. **SajanBhandartar**
TISS, Mumbai
46. **Gitesh Sinha**
CSD, New Delhi
47. **Prof. Neeru Snehi**
NUEPA, New Delhi
48. **Prof. Kumar Siwas**
NUEPA, New Delhi
49. **Dr. Madhumita**
NUEPA, New Delhi
50. **DeekshaTayal**
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51. **K.Ramachandran**
NUEPA, New Delhi
52. **Apoorvanand**
CSD, New Delhi
53. **Kashyepi Awasthi,**
NUEPA, New Delhi

54. Dr. Anupam Pachauri
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55. Dr. Kashyapi Awasthi
Assistant Professor, National Centre for School Leadership, NUEPA, New Delhi

56. N.Mythili
Asst Professor, NCSL, NUEPA, New Delhi

57. Dr. A.S. Hansal
IGNOU, New Delhi

58. Rashmi Diwan
NUEPA, New Delhi

59. Prashant Mishra
CSD, New Delhi

60. Nalini Junega
NUEPA, New Delhi

61. Shalini Bhutani
Legal Researcher & Policy Analyst, New Delhi

62. Shashiranjana Jha
Manager Education and Skills Development, PE Global Limited, New Delhi

63. Prof. Nalini Juneja
NUEPA, New Delhi

64. Dr. Madhumita Bandhopadhyay
NUEPA, New Delhi

65. Dr. Vikas Bajpai, Assistant Professor
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73. Ms. Sulekha Singh
Action Aid, New Delhi

74. Aprajita Sharma
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76. Anamika Priyadarshini
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77. Mitra Ranjan
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78. Dr. K.K. Gupta
ICMAR, New Delhi

79. Mr. Sidharth Singh
Advocate
Ministry of Social Justice, New Delhi

80. A.k. Mitra
Paschim Vihar, New Delhi

81. Prof. Dolly Mathew
Professor Faculty of Public Administration, IGNOU, New Delhi

82. N Rajendran
Delhi University

- 83. Dr. Senthamizh Kanal**
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IGNOU, New Delhi
- 84. Dr. Sandhya Chopra**
Academic Associate
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- 85. Rekha Rani Kapoor**
IASE, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
- 86. Sunny Dhiman**
JNU, New Delhi
- 87. Ahjaz Ali Shah**
JNU, New Delhi
- 88. M.B. Chander**
Delhi University
- 89. Surendra Ghosh**
CSD, New Delhi
- 90. Arathi, Assistant Professor**
CSD, New Delhi

- 91. Sunita Dheel**
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- 92. Aditya Sharma**
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- 93. Shubhundo Roy**
National Social Watch
- 94. Jatin Agrawal**
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- 95. Kopal Srivastava**
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- 97. Noopur Verma**
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