

## MAHARASHTRA AT 7-7-7: EVOLVING POLICY CONTEXT

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The contribution of the people of Maharashtra to liberal and progressive thinking has a unique place in the evolving political context of India. Maharashtra has many 'firsts' to its credit, e.g. the first session of the Indian National Congress was held in Maharashtra (Mumbai) in 1885.

Maharashtra will always be proud of Savitribai Phule, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, Tarabai Modak, Anutai Wagh, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Baba Amte and several other unsung heroes who have sown and continue to sow the seeds of progressiveness in the mindsets of the people of Maharashtra vis-à-vis economic, social and political justice. Interestingly, a number of these individuals and movements led by them have focused on issues covered under the MDGs, much before the recognition of the latter as universal goals. That there must exist a symbiotic relationship between progressiveness and policy is hence not a new thought to the people of Maharashtra.

This chapter provides an overview of the evolving policy scenario in the State with respect to addressing problems in the area of poverty, education, health, dignity and livelihoods.<sup>1</sup>

### Poverty

#### ***Goal-1: Eradicate extremely poverty and hunger***

***Target-1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$ 1/day***

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

The poverty alleviation programmes in Maharashtra have dominantly focused on creation of incomes. Poverty eradication through skill creation and skill upgradation has taken a backseat in the context of Maharashtra. While the State administration runs apprenticeship training and entrepreneurial development programmes implemented by the State government the amounts spent are paltry 5-10 crore when an estimated 10,00,000 youth in Maharashtra are estimated to be unemployed or under-employed.

As per the latest estimates, 26 million people (or approximately 6.5 million families) out of 96.75 million inhabitants<sup>2</sup> in Maharashtra's 35 districts are below poverty line<sup>3</sup>.

The 'Employment Guarantee Scheme' (EGS) of Maharashtra implemented since 1972 (and legislated in 1976) has become a role-model in terms of its conceptual framework for a number of states, as it not only generates employment and incomes but also helps creating the much physical infrastructure in far flung rural areas of the state. Government of Maharashtra has been able to create employment of 169 million person-days (at least on paper) at an estimated expenditure of Rs. 9830 million (US\$ 218.44 million<sup>4</sup>) in 2005-06<sup>5</sup> there allocating only a paltry Rs. 58.16 (US\$ 1.29) for creating one person-day of employment. These allocations also include the administration expenditure incurred to run this programme.

Maharashtra has been also been implementing most of the centrally sponsored employment programmes since their inception. At present the Government of Maharashtra is implementing:

1. 'Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana' aimed at assisting poor families to rise above the poverty line through a mix of bank credit and government subsidy by promoting self-employment.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter only covers major mechanisms being utilized by the State Machinery to address these issues

<sup>2</sup> Census of India 2001

<sup>3</sup> National Sample Survey figures for the year 2004-05 published in March 2007

<sup>4</sup> Assumption: 1US\$ = Rs. 45

<sup>5</sup> Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2006-07; page 241

2. 'Swarnajayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojana' aimed (replacing three schemes such as 'Nehru Rojgar Yojana', Urban Basic Services for Poor' and 'Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Scheme') aimed at providing employment to urban unemployed/underemployed below poverty line who have a minimum education up to std. IX.
3. 'Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana' aimed at providing to employment/self employment to educated youth through a combination of subsidy and bank credit.
4. 'Rashtriya Gramin Rojgar Hami Yojana' in 12 districts in phase-I under which a minimum 100 days employment is assured during financial year to a person per household in rural area on demand for work.

According to Sen (1990)<sup>6</sup>, the problem of hunger can be divided into two types, viz. famines and endemic deprivation. The problem of hunger in certain parts of Maharashtra is of the second variety. This endemic deprivation many times arises from continued State actions, such as forced evictions of farmers from their land. Right to land and livelihood are intimately connected to eradication of hunger in a state like Maharashtra where around 55% of the labour force is dependent for their livelihood on agriculture<sup>7</sup>. The State seems to have conveniently neglected this link due to its political ramifications.

The Government of Maharashtra has although been implementing the 'Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojana' (formed by the merging of 'Employment Assurance Scheme' and 'Jawahar Gram Samridhhi Yojana') aimed at providing additional employment to improve food and nutritional security. The cost of food grains distributed under this scheme is borne 100% by the Government of India and not the State Government.

The 'Rajmata Jijau Mother-Child Health & Nutrition Mission' was constituted by Government during March 2005 issued by the Department of Women & Child Development, Government of Maharashtra. The Mission has as its primary objective, the reduction of severely malnutrition in children in the 0-6 age group in the State.

The 'Supplementary Nutrition Programme', implemented under the 'Integrated Child Development Services Scheme' aims at providing nutritious diet to the children below six years.

### Education

#### ***Goal-2: Achieving universal primary education***

***Target-3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.***

Maharashtra has, on paper, some of the most progressive schemes in the area of universalizing education.

As a part of universalization of education, the Government has fixed the norm to open a primary school ('Vasti Shalas') within a vicinity of 1.5 km of inhabitation having minimum population of 200. The Mahatma Phule Shikshan Hami Yojana is mainly implemented for children working as child labour in urban and rural areas.

With a view to providing nutritional diets to students for increasing their attendance to schools a scheme is administered by the State wherein a primary student with an attendance of more than 80% is provided with 3 kg of Rice as a nutritional diet. However due to the Supreme Court judgment, students are now to be provided with cooked food. It may although be noted that rice under this scheme is provided by the Central Government, whereas the State government provides a grant of 50 paise per student per school for cooked food.

<sup>6</sup> Sen Amartya (1990); "Public Action to Remedy Hunger"; Tanco Memorial Lecture delivered at London in August; this speech can be downloaded from: <http://www.thp.org/reports/sen/sen890.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2006-07; pg.199

## Health<sup>8</sup>

### Goal-4: Reduce child mortality

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

### Goal-5: Improve maternal health

*Target-6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio*

### Goal-6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

*Target-7: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*

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

Official data suggests that 40% of both mothers and children in Maharashtra are chronically undernourished and under-five mortality occurs at 58 deaths per 1,000 live births in the State.<sup>9</sup> In view of such a deleterious position, the Government is implementing a five year (2005-2010) integrated programme to reduce childhood mortality and morbidity due to diarrhea and dehydration by educating health-care providers, mothers and children.

The 'Navsanjeevani Yojana' has been initiated with the aim of reducing infant mortality and maternal mortality rate in tribal areas. The reproductive and child health programme under the 'National Rural Health Mission' being implemented in Maharashtra is aimed at reducing the child mortality and maternal mortality. Under this programme, folic acid and ferrous sulphate tablets are distributed to pregnant women and children between one to five years. Besides immunization (BCG, Measles) and other immunization doses like tetanus toxoid and oral Vitamin A are also administered under this programme.

The 'Pulse Polio Programme' (to free the state from Polio) is also implemented in the State.

The Government of Maharashtra formed Maharashtra State Aids Control (MSACS) in 1998 to control HIV/AIDS pandemic. The funds are utilized to run integrated counseling and testing centres and for the 'Antiretroviral Strategy'. Under the latter, is to suppress viral replication to undetectable levels, thereby converting HIV into a chronic manageable illness.

The Government of Maharashtra has declared a Child Development Policy, which is mainly for orphan, destitute, homeless and deviated children. The objectives of this policy are:

1. enhancement of antenatal and postnatal care of the child;
2. to provide free of cost educational and entertainment facilities;
3. prevention of sexual exploitation and trafficking of children;
4. to establish sufficient institutions for HIV affected children;
5. to provide facilities of occupational training to children in day care centres, juvenile homes *et al.*

In 2006, Maharashtra accounted for 6% of the dengue cases reported in the country (Rajasthan accounted for the highest at 15%)<sup>10</sup>. To intensify malaria-control activities, World Bank assisted Enhanced Malaria Control Project has been started since October 1997. District Malaria Control Societies have been established and registered for 16 tribal Districts in the State. Various activities that will prevent proliferation of Malaria are

<sup>8</sup> A substantive amount information on schemes being implemented in the health sector has been drawn from 'Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2006-07'

<sup>9</sup> Rehydration Project of the Government of Maharashtra; for more information kindly refer to:

<http://hetv.org/india/mh/plan/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> A detailed paper on this issue can be viewed at: [www.nvbdc.gov.in/Doc/DenStatusNote.pdf](http://www.nvbdc.gov.in/Doc/DenStatusNote.pdf)

being carried out through these District Malaria Control Societies. Funds are provided to these District Malaria Control Societies directly by the Centre.

### Dignity

*Goal-3: Promote gender equality and empower women*

*Target-4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015*

Under the 'Savitribai Phule Kanya Kalyan Scheme', the family below poverty line having one or two daughters and no male child and accepting sterilization is given Rs. 5,000 in the name of each daughter in the form of fixed deposit for 18 years.

Free textbooks to primary students are distributed especially in Panchayat Samiti areas where female literacy rate is found to be below national average. Under the 'Ahilyabai Holkar Scheme', the State government provides free travel concession to girls from rural areas studying in standards V to X for attending schools. In order to promote primary education amongst girls hailing from schedule caste/scheduled tribe and nomadic tribes, the Government pays one rupee per girl as attendance allowance.

Under the 'Indira Gandhi Niradhar and Bhumiheen Shetmajoor Mahila Anudan Yojana', women below age of 65 years in the categories of landless agricultural labour, destitute widows, sexually abused women, whose husband is head of the family and is in prison, released from prostitution and orphan girls are considered as beneficiaries. The beneficiaries under this scheme are paid a monthly sum of Rs. 250 until they are permanently rehabilitated.

Maharashtra is the first state in India to formulate 'Women Policy' in the year 1994 which was reviewed in 2001. The main objectives of 'Women Policy', 2001 are:

1. women focused planning;
2. to provide sufficient fund for women's empowerment;
3. economic development through self-help groups; and
4. Formulation of programmes in agriculture and rural development keeping focus on women.

Analyzing the issue of dignity for women, in the socioeconomic and political context of Maharashtra cannot be limited to analyzing whether there exists gender disparity in primary and secondary education vis-à-vis women. Neither does it get addressed by merely allocating funds for empowerment of women.

Panchayats headed by women have demonstrated impressive developmental gains. They have tended to prioritize drinking water, smokeless stoves, and girls' schools over roads and community halls.<sup>11</sup>

The material measures taken by political parties, as well as the State and its various arms, to facilitate sustained and qualitative participation of women (through electoral processes and not through mechanisms of co-option), especially from socially and economically backward groupings, into political and decision-making institutions, is a true sign of recognition of dignity of women by the State. The performance of the State Administration on this front needs to be analyzed.

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<sup>11</sup> Jayal Niraja (2007); "Women's Participation in Local Bodies"; OneWorld South Asia; This article can be viewed at: <http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/144812/1/>

## Livelihoods

### Goal-7: Ensure environmental sustainability

*Target-9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources*

*Target-10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation*

Around 23% of Maharashtra's total available land area is under forest and tree cover, while the net sown area is about 57% and the remaining is almost equally distributed between barren, nonagricultural and fallow land.<sup>12</sup>

Environmental sustainability and livelihoods have an extremely close linkage in a state like Maharashtra wherein farmers, tribal communities, nomadic tribes constitute around 63% of the total population. Massive and rapid urbanization in the state has led to eviction of farmers and tribals from their lands and forests respectively without provision of any rehabilitation plan that can provide these farmers and tribals with sustainable livelihood or sustainable employment opportunities. Moreover, ever increasing construction activity in urban and semi-urban parts of the State, coupled with growing preference exhibited by farmers towards cultivation of commercial crops, has resulted in serious depletion of existing ground water resources in the state. Lack of environmental infrastructure is leading to pollution of drinking water sources as well as lakes and ponds which are sources of drinking water for rural populations and cattle.<sup>13</sup>

For a large number of 'Mahar Vatan' land holders, the quality of land and unavailability of resources (such as water, credit, implements) are becoming biggest obstacles to utilize this natural resource effectively. Hence in spite of having land, these land-holders have been transformed into migrant labour.

Ensuring a right to a dignified livelihood and employment opportunity by ensuring effective access to natural resources and other essential support mechanisms across the State, and not in certain pockets, is going one of the critical factors to reduce migration of communities, thereby reducing pressure on natural resource bowls in Maharashtra. Concentration of communities in such resource pockets is leading to rapid exhaustion of renewable and non-renewable resources in the region thereby harming its environment and ecology.

Conveniently disregarding the root of the problem, successive governments of Maharashtra have only concentrated on a range of cosmetic measures such as beautification of lakes in urban spaces (under the name of conservation), spreading environmental awareness and "purification" of polluted rivers.

## **In conclusion**

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Maharashtra indeed has institutionalized some of the most progressive and innovative schemes to address problems of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, with a special focus on women. This implies that there exists a progressive intent within the state on at least some of the MDGs. Whether this intent has translated into action, is verified in the analysis presented in the forthcoming chapters.

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<sup>12</sup> IGIDR; "State of the Environment Report: Maharashtra"; Final Draft; This draft report can be viewed at: [http://envis.maharashtra.gov.in/envis\\_data/pdf/SOER\\_final\\_Draft.pdf](http://envis.maharashtra.gov.in/envis_data/pdf/SOER_final_Draft.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.* 8