



## **HAQ: Centre for Child Rights**

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### **Political Economy of Child Rights in India Inc and Child Budget Analysis**

#### **A Concept Note**

Despite being the world's 10<sup>th</sup> largest economy, India ranks 127 on the Human Development Index, with the index value at 0.602. It is a pity that investment in physical infrastructure is seen as of greater importance than the investment in human resource development, which would drive the economic growth. Health, education, and social support are seen as social welfare, i.e. a drain on the exchequer rather than as integral part of the development. If all child rights indicators were to become a critical measure for HDI, India would fare even worse, particularly because of its poor performance on accepted national goals for the survival, development and protection of its children and because of the failure to address the interconnectedness between poverty and income insecurity of adults and how it undermines essential life supports for their children.

Over the last decade, countries across the world have embarked on changing existing economic models in favour of ones driven by the free market, incorporating processes of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. This phenomena is emerging as an important factor in marginalisation of children today, considering that the process of globalisation is leading to growing disparities between the rich and the poor, depletion of natural resources and loss of traditional livelihoods, forced migration, consumerism and violence. In this situation, it is important to track these trends and the impact on children as well as examine the increased vulnerability of some children.

Slamming the Indian government for the rising number of farmer suicides, 'The Extent of Chronic Hunger and Malnutrition in India' : report presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council on 22 September 2005 by Jean Ziegler, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, says that "sustained economic growth in the 1990s made the country a more market-oriented economy, but this did not mean equitable benefits for all Indians. The middle and upper classes benefited, but the poor suffered a decline in living standards...The focus on a more export-oriented economy has seen a shift from subsistence to cash crops, reducing the cultivation of grain, pulses and millets for household consumption. With cash crops requiring increasingly expensive inputs such as seeds and fertiliser, many farmers have been pushed heavily into debt, explaining the increasing number of farmer suicides -- nearly 10,000 by 2004"

Amongst all the reasons for increasing food insecurity and increasing penury of the farmers, the one that has the most far-reaching effect is the attitude of the present day government. In the name of economic growth and development it has forgotten the principle of equitability and social justice. The government's oft-repeated mantra for ensuring food security and well being of the farmers has turned out to be a lip service, particularly for gaining political mileage. Its real intention is clear — to benefit big corporate houses at the expense of farmers.

## India's Children: Where do they stand?

Nineteen per cent of world's children live in India. They constitute 42 per cent of India's total population, i.e. more than four in every ten people.

2.5 million children die in India every year, accounting for one in five deaths in the world, with girls being 50 per cent more likely to die. India accounts for 35 per cent of the developing world's low birth weight babies and 40 per cent of child malnutrition in developing countries, one of the highest levels in the world.

The child sex ratio (0-6 years) declined from 945 girls to 1,000 boys in 1991 to 927 in the 2001 Census. Around 80 percent of the total 577 districts in the country registered a decline in the child sex ratio between 1991 and 2001.

India has the second highest national total of persons living with HIV/AIDS after the Republic of South Africa. According to NACO, there were an estimated 0.55 lakh HIV infected 0-14 year old children in India in 2003. UNAIDS however, puts this figure at 0.16 million children.

According to the 2001 Census Report, amongst all persons living with disability, 35.9 per cent (46,38,26,702) are children and young adults in the 0-19 age group. Three out of five children in the age group of 0-9 years have been reported to be visually impaired. Movement disability has the highest proportion (33.2 per cent) in the age group of 10-19. This is largely true of 'mental' disability also.

As per the 2001 census, the population of children aged 0-6 years is 16.4 crore (163,819,614). A UNESCO report reveals that only 29 per cent of pre-primary age children are enrolled in education structures in India. Services under the ICDS scheme cover only 3.41 crore children in the age group 0-6 years (as on 31.3.2004), which is around 22 per cent of the total children in that age group. Supplementary nutrition too is being provided to 3.4 crore children, as opposed to 16 crore children. There are only 6 lakh *anganwadis* in the country, compared with an estimated 17 lakh required for universal coverage based on existing norms.

The number of creches under the 'Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers' is 23,834. This is totally inadequate when the requirement of creches to cater to the childcare needs of the 22 crore women in the informal sector alone is 800,000.

India still has 0.95 crore out-of-school children in the 6-14 age group. The average of 581 districts reveals that a large number of children drop out from the system before reaching Grade V, which is true both for boys and girls and for rural and urban areas. The 'Education For All' (EFA) monitoring report, released by UNESCO on November 6, 2003, cautioned that India is "at risk of not achieving the Millennium Development Goal of universalisation of education by 2015." Poor infrastructure, inaccessibility of schools, teacher absenteeism, low quality of teaching, corporal punishment, cultural barriers, etc. are some of the factors responsible for pushing children out of school. In the wake of forced eviction and forced migration, children's right to education needs special attention. Lack of residential facilities for girls belonging to backward areas and lack of transport facilities coupled with large distances to be travelled for attending schools become a hindrance in education of girls.

The National Crime Records Bureau reported 9,473 cases of various crimes against children in 2004.

- World's highest number of child labourers is in India.
- India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children, with a child below 16 years raped every 155<sup>th</sup> minute, a child below 10 every 13<sup>th</sup> hour, and one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point of time.
- Children are trafficked within and across borders for a number of reasons.
- Most subtle forms of violence against children such as child marriage, economic exploitation, practices like the 'Devadasi' tradition of dedicating young girls to gods and goddesses, genital mutilation in some parts of the country, are justified on grounds of culture and tradition.
- Physical and psychological punishment is rampant in the name of disciplining children and is culturally accepted.
- Forced evictions, displacement due to development projects, war and conflict, communal riots, natural disasters, all of these take their own toll on children.
- Juvenile delinquency records, reflecting inadequacies in the society, show 19,229 cases of crimes committed by children in 2004.

Source: Working Group for the XIth Five-Year Plan on Child Development

## Child Budget Analysis: a tool for tracking progress on children's rights and advocating for change

One of the tools to track the situation of children in a globalised and neo-liberal market economy, a political economy that lacks the leadership and the will to meet its policy commitments to children, is child budget analysis.

Government spending, particularly on social services, affects children directly. Yet, the government is not able to meet its policy commitments to children in the face of tight budget constraints. There are several reasons why the budget should give priority attention to children:

- Nineteen per cent of world's children live in India. They comprise 42 per cent of the country's total population. In international comparisons of the status and condition of children, India continues to rank poorly on several key counts. Children still suffer from poor nutrition, inadequate health services, clean water, sanitation and basic education.
- Children are voiceless and are at a particularly vulnerable stage of life. They do not form a powerful political lobby, and cannot advocate for themselves for more effective delivery of socio-economic services that meet their needs. Thus, the lack of a detailed assessment of how much the government is spending on children inhibits the effective improvement of basic living standards of children.
- Budgetary programmes, specifically socio-economic expenditures, affect the well-being and life opportunities of children directly.
- The well being of the society depends on the investment in its human resource development, particularly development of children and the youth.
- India has ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and has thus promised to place children's Rights at the forefront of development. We promised to give greater priority to the children's concern than was being given before as a part of all our developmental programs.

### **Child Budget Analysis in India**

Recognising that budgets are an important tool for monitoring child rights and can be effectively used to advocate for desired change, HAQ undertook a decadal analysis of the Union Budget from a child rights perspective, which was published in 2002. This was the first endeavour of its kind in the country and it helped in understanding the process of budgeting and establishing the need for such analysis along with developing a methodology for the same. However, child budget work has come a long way since then.

Budget for children is not a separate budget. It is merely an attempt to disaggregate from the overall budget the allocations made specifically for programmes that benefit children.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development too has now decided to undertake regular child budget analysis as an important mandate. The first such endeavour by the Government of India was in 2002-03, which, as mentioned in the Annual Report of the Department of Women and Child Development for 2002-03 and 2004-05, was based on HAQ's work. Sustained advocacy and lobbying with the Government of India has successfully led to institutionalisation of child budgeting, which is currently being carried out for the Ministry of Woman and Child Development by UNICEF, through the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA).

The World Bank too has drawn on HAQ's methodology for their paper on public spending on the child published in a World bank report — 'Reaching out to the child: An Integrated Approach to Child Development', in September 2004 has a chapter "Underwriting the Child's Development: Public Spending on the Child".

While, an analysis of the Union Budget is important for an understanding of financial commitment to children at the national level, it is not enough. Since a large share of the allocation and expenditure is made in the states, a study of the state budgets also becomes necessary to enable a holistic understanding. If child budgeting at the state level is to become a reality, it is important to empower local NGOs to undertake such initiatives, develop a common methodology and provide requisite technical assistance. Once the ground is set, using the findings effectively for advocacy at the state, district and local levels of governance is a natural process, especially if such analysis is carried out by an agency/organisation based in the state. It is recognizing this that ICCW – Tamil Nadu too undertook child budget analysis of the budget of 1998-2004 in the State of Tamil Nadu after discussions with HAQ.

HAQ began child budget analysis work in three states in 2002 in partnership with state level NGOs - Andhra Pradesh (with M.V. Foundation), Orissa (with Open Learning Systems) and Himachal Pradesh (with Himachal Pradesh Voluntary Health Association).

In 2005 it started similar work in Uttaranchal (in partnership with SAROKAR, a network of NGOs), Jharkhand (in partnership with CREJ, also a network of NGOs) and in 2006 it has initiated work in Uttar Pradesh (in partnership with CREDA), Assam (in partnership with North Eastern Social Research Centre – NESRC) and West Bengal (in partnership with Society for People's Awareness-SPAN).

The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) is carrying out State level child budget analysis in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, besides the analysis of the Union Budget. Concerned Citizens for Health and Development in partnership with Institute for Development Studies Jaipur is undertaking child budget work in Rajasthan.

### **Experience of using Child Budget Analysis as an advocacy tool**

While advocacy and lobbying with the Government of India has institutionalised child budgeting at the national level, over the years, there are several experiences of HAQ, its partner organizations as well as other human rights networks and campaigns on effective use of child budget analysis at various levels of governance. These need to be drawn upon and shared for even better and more strategic use of this tool. For example, HAQ's child budget analysis has

Sharing information on child budget analysis with the gram sabha helps build pressure on the sarpanch, who in turn is able to use the information to negotiate with Block and District Officials for better grants. Now the officials get worried when they see our Child Protection Committee members because they know that they can no longer be fooled. The panchayat members carry the child budget information in their pocket when they go for discussions.

M.V. Foundations's Experience at Using Child Budget Analysis

been used to file legal petitions, for strengthening arguments of various campaigns such as the Right to Food campaign, for raising questions in the Parliament and debating on various pending bills, including the 93<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment. It has also been used by children to demand higher allocations and investment of adequate resources. At the international level, child budget analysis work of HAQ has been used by Haq and others to make submissions and also prepare shadow reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. At the grassroots level, MVF got HAQ's report – "What does the Budget 2005-06 have for Children?" translated into Telugu and used it extensively for advocacy with elected representatives.

### **The Panel**

With the work on child budget getting institutionalized in government, as well as within NGOs, this is a good time to share experiences and draw upon them for further advocacy. Effective use of such a tool depends on how well we are able to connect child budget analysis with larger issues of development, micro and macro economic policies, trade agreements and position the child in the context of globalization and India's political economy. Clearly, the situation of children is getting worse by the day since the adoption of economic reforms, as the State is withdrawing from the social sectors, and this coupled with the privatisation of resources and the lack of employment opportunities, has aggravated the situation of disparity.

The proposed panel is being organised to share discuss the use of Child Budget Analysis can be used for:

- To monitor the allocation and expenditure of resources for children by the government to realise ensuring their rights
- Advocacy to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources
- Empowering social action groups, communities and children themselves with budget related information to enable them to create a public argument for policy change.